

**UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT**



**UNDERGRADUATE PROJECT:**

**“HOW CLASS SIZE INFLUENCES THE SPEAKING SKILLS OF THE STUDENTS IN THE READING AND CONVERSATION I COURSES IN ENGLISH AT THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT OF UNIVERSIDAD DE EL SALVADOR, SEMESTER II – 2017”.**

**IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF:**

**BACHELOR OF ARTS IN MODERN LANGUAGES, SPECIALTY IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH.**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

It is necessary to express our gratitude to all those people who make this research project possible. First, we would like to thank God who gave us life, strength and enable us to complete this study without him we would not be able to accomplish it.

Second, this research project would not have been possible without the support of our advisor Lic. Jose Ricardo Gamero Ortiz who provided his time, encouragement and knowledge throughout the whole process, besides, his advices and corrections contributed to complete this research properly.

Special thanks to the teachers of the classes we evaluated and observed for allowing us to work with their groups. We also want to express our sincere gratitude to all the participants from those groups who helped us to carry out this research.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to all the members of our families, and friends for their love, interest and support they provided us. This research would not have been possible without the help of all of these individuals who in one way or another helped and extended their valuable assistance in the preparation and completion of this study.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Throughout this research study, the researchers tried to find the best recommendations to implement solutions on how class size is influencing the speaking skills of the students in reading and Conversation I in English.

The research project consists of five chapters

- The first chapter is basically the segment that includes the introduction, delimitation of the problem, statement of the problem that describes the issue, besides that, the objectives, general and specific objectives that will guide this research study.
- The second chapter is all about the theoretical framework that involves the information that the researchers collected from books, magazines, articles on internet, mentioning theories and authors supporting the research project.
- The third chapter explains the methodology of the research, which describes the methods, techniques, selected population, the sampling and the instruments that researchers administered to the students and teachers (surveys, interviews and check list observation) which was used to gather information towards the topic.
- The fourth chapter is all about the data analysis process, this is the section where all the information gathered from the instruments is analyzed by the researchers to find percentages and what the students and teachers think related to the research topic.
- Finally, the fifth chapter is related to the conclusions and recommendations that the researchers proposed based on this research project to find the best suggestions to resolve the issue.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

It may seem that a successful and effective class in which students learn a new language will be that one full of different types of students, who share ideas, interact and construct language by using their own experiences. However, there has always been a debate about the effect of class size on students' performance when learning a second language and different factors suggesting that class size in higher education is crucial in student' outcomes. Elementary school students learn more in smaller classes (see Finn & Achilles, 1999); "As schools get larger, they usually expand their administrative staffs (Chambers, 1981)" say Lee and Loeb in their article Effects of School Size on Attitudes and Achievement. Besides that, students in large classes in higher education have the maturity to know that their performance will only depend on the responsibilities and commitment they have as students to achieve great scores (Louis et al., 1996).

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In this study researchers analyzed how class size influences the speaking skills of the students of Reading and Conversation I courses at the Foreign Language Department of Universidad de El Salvador. there has always been a debate about the effects of class size on students' performance when learning a second language and different factors suggesting that class size in higher education is crucial in student' outcomes mainly their speaking skills.

Class size can determine a positive or negative impact of speaking skills of the students at Universidad de El Salvador. The ideal situation will be the one where a classroom of 18 or 20 students can express their ideas, interact with all the classmates, besides, a good environment where the teacher is able to adapt his/her methodology to the class for the students to participate using their speaking skills and being provided with respective feedback.

At the University of El Salvador this ideal situation is not visible because based on the instruments students stated that the scarce academic staff is not able to be distributed in more groups so that teachers cannot provide feedback and develop all activities related to their speaking skills between all the students during the class. In addition, it is notorious new classrooms have to be built in the Foreign Language Department.

The researchers intended to find the best suggestions to solve this situation, this permits to discover about the topic in depth which provides the best alternatives to execute.

All of the aspects mentioned above make researchers to focus on a topic:  
**“How class size influences the speaking skills of the students in the Reading and Conversation in English I courses at the Foreign Languages Department of Universidad de El Salvador, semester II - 2017”.**

## **OBJECTIVES**

### **General objective:**

- o To analyze the influence that class size has in the speaking skills of the students through surveys, interviews and observation to identify the best suggestions to solve the problem in the Reading and Conversation I courses at Universidad de El Salvador.

### **Specific objectives:**

- To evaluate the positive impact of class size in the speaking skills that the students of the Foreign Language Department can develop.
- To evaluate the negative impact of class size in the speaking skills that the students of the Foreign Language Department can develop.
- To identify how the class size influences in the teacher's methodology for the students to practice the oral skills in large and small groups.
- To observe the students' attitudes during the class in small and large groups.
- To determine the percentage of students who have failed Reading and Conversation I courses in the last two years due to the influence of class size affecting their speaking skills.



## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS.**

What are the effects of class size in the students' oral proficiency in the reading and conversation I?

How different the teachers' learning techniques are implemented in small and large groups?

What are the differences in the students' behavior about small and large classes?

What is the percentage of failed students due to the class size issue related to their speaking acquisition?

What is the effectiveness to have smaller classes in the groups of Reading and conversation I in English?

## **JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH**

The purpose of this study was to analyze the influence that class size has in the speaking skills of the students of Reading and Conversation I courses. It is important to mention that when learning English as a Second Language the most important field is the oral production students have because to communicate they really need to be confident and prepared when they speak.

The lack of teachers to be distributed in different groups at the Foreign Language Department is a real problem in these days based on the information gathered through instruments administered to the students and teachers. The researchers carried out this study to identify the positive and negative impact affecting the speaking skills of the students.

Furthermore, Class size is important when it comes to the methodology that teachers use in their courses because class size influences their dynamics and activities, spaces are not enough. It is a necessary that they should take into account when teaching so they can obtain the best performance in students of Reading and Conversation I courses especially in the oral production field this has to be treated as a problem to find a solution soon.

In addition, it is essential to observe the students' attitudes towards the topic because they may behave differently in small or large groups, to comprehend if they would improve or affect their speaking skills in a small or large class providing a solution to attack the problem.

Therefore, it is necessary to know the percentage of students who have failed in the last two years due to class size influences because it is not acceptable that a problem of this nature should persist in the Foreign Language Department of Universidad de El Salvador.

For all the reasons mentioned above is vital to research about this matter to provide the best suggestions for people in charge of finding and applying solutions.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **Class size definition.**

#### **The Meaning and Measurement of Class Size**

Eherenberg, Brewer, Gamoran, and Willms (2001), state that class size is not the same thing as the pupil/teacher ratio. Indeed, it is quite different. The calculation of a pupil /teacher ratio typically includes teachers who spend all or part of their day as administrators, librarians, special education, support staff itinerant teachers, or other roles outside the classroom. Thus, pupil/teacher ratio is a global measure of the human resources brought to bear, directly and indirectly, on children's learning. Class size refers to the actual number of pupils taught by a teacher at a particular time. Thus, the pupil's teacher ratio is always lower than the average class size, and the discrepancy between the two can vary, depending on teacher's roles and the amount of time teachers spend in the classroom during school day. From an administrative or economic point of view, pupil/teacher ratio is very important, because it is closely related to the amount of money spent per child. However, from a psychological perspective, in terms about how students learn what matters is the number of students who are physically present interacting among themselves and with the teachers. The measurement of class size is not straightforward, as it might seem. It can vary considerably for a single child at different times during school day and school year, because of student's mobility, student's absence, truancy, or the presence of pullout special education classes. Class size data that include a temporal dimension are seldom available; in most

cases, researchers use data pertaining to a number of pupils enrolled in a class. Class size measures thus, typically contain considerable measurement error. If this measurement error is random, estimates of the relationship between schooling outcomes and class size will be biased towards zero. That is, the relationships that are estimated will, on average, be smaller in absolute value than the true relationships between class size and school outcomes. According to Blatchford (2003), class size is the number of students in a class in charge of a teacher. Average class size represents the average number of students being taught by a teacher in a specific period.

According to Blatchford, P. (2003). *The class size has always been a debate: Is small better?* Maidenhead, U.K. and Philadelphia, U.S.A: Open University Press. - Class size is defined as the number of pupils in a class with one teacher. Average class size represents the average number of pupils being taught by one teacher classes during a single selected period in each school on the day of the Annual School Census in January. It is calculated by dividing the number of pupils being taught by the number of classes, at the time of the Annual School Census in January 2. This measurement gives information on the number of classes taught by one or more teachers (Blatchford, 2003).

## **Areas affected by Class size.**

Based on Eherenberg, Brewer, Gamoran, and Willms (2001), the number of students in a class size has the potential to affect how much is learned in a number of different ways.

It could affect...

- ✓ How students interact with each other (the level of social engagement), this may result, for example in more or less noise and disrupted behavior, which in turn affect the kinds of activities the teacher is able to promote.
- ✓ How much time the teacher is able to focus on individual students and their specific needs rather than on the group as a whole.

## **Small class size.**

It is really necessary to point out that each student learns in different ways and each of them has different capacities and abilities, so students have the potential to learn in different manners than the same content in a large class is not taken into account because the class size is too large. Students' relationships and friendships are very important, the more friends they have, the better they feel as a whole class, in a small class they have the opportunity to interact more and share information with each other, and the teacher can explain the class and the entire class will be able to listen because most of the time the teacher is the one who takes the control of a class without any inconvenience. Eherenberg, Brewer, Gamoran, and Willms (2001).

Finn and Pannozzo and Achilles (2003) have investigated this phenomenon about class size making an impact on students' achievements. He has provided an explanation giving reasons on how small classes have better results on students' learning taking advantage of the benefits of it. He said, "*Small classes have positive effects*". He explained in his article that when having small class sizes, students commit more than in the large class. The commitments from students' and class size are completely related.

Furthermore, most of the parents think when students are in small classes is better than others who study in large class sizes because it may be the possibility that in large class teacher is not paying attention to each of them as it should be and students could get confused; as Arias and Walker (2010) confirms “Students, parents, and administrators often believe that smaller university classes are better. It is probably true that students in smaller classes receive more personal attention, are more likely to be known by name by their professors, and may feel more comfortable to ask questions or otherwise participate in class discussions”

On the other hand, other studies suggest that small classes give students the opportunity to perform better as they have an environment in which the teacher can give personal feedback and assessment in case students have deficiencies with the target language. According to Lee e.t, al (1993), “Social relations are also more positive in small groups. The preponderance of sociological evidence suggests that except in the extreme, smaller is better”.

## **Benefits of Small Class Size.**

Benefits of Small Class Size American Federation of Teachers (2003). The AFT is a strong advocate for reducing class size to help raise student achievement, especially in high-poverty, at risk schools. Class size is most effective when classes are between 15 and 19 students; particular schools are targeted; there is an adequate supply of qualified teachers; and adequate classroom space. In addition to increasing student achievement, smaller classes: improve classroom atmosphere, students receive more attention, teachers know their students better, teachers spend more time on instruction and less time on discipline.

According to R. Kennedy (March 2015) and L. Haimson (June 2010); at EF Academy, a majority of our classes have an impressively low student-teacher ratio of 15:1. Small class sizes and an inspiring and highly qualified teaching faculty ensure that students get the best speaking results. It is notorious that there are many benefits on class size groups:

**Each Student gets Noticed.**

In a smaller class, it's more difficult for students to hide and get left behind. Fewer students mean that each one gets attention from the teacher, and they are encouraged and pushed to take part and express their opinions.

**Better Results.**

Research done by R. Kennedy (March 2015) and L. Haimson (June 2010); has shown that high school students in smaller classes have higher grades and perform better on their university entrance exams or during their stay there.

**Learning is Enhanced.**

Not only the students learn more in small classes, but they also learn faster. And this means the class progresses through the course material more quickly. Their learning is enhanced by the confidence students develop to share their opinions and ask and answer questions, which also benefits their peers.

**Teachers can Teach.**

Teachers at the front of a small class have more opportunities to observe and assess the class as a whole and the students as individuals. Learning is further enhanced when teachers and students can interact spontaneously in the classroom.

**Classes become a Community.**

With fewer students per class, individuals can connect more closely with their peers and become more confident and comfortable when it comes to sharing their ideas and perspectives. These connections lead to lasting friendships. At an international school, students will respect and connect with peers who are from different cultures and countries – a skill that is very important in the globalized 21st century.

**Opportunities to participate.**

Small groups mean fewer voices and that means the students whose voices belong to have more chances to speak up in class. They can apply the knowledge they've acquired as they participate in discussions and express their opinions.

**Focus on Learning.**

In learning environments with a limited number of students, teachers can spend more time teaching the material and less time getting the attention of those who get distracted. Teachers can also cater to students' different learning styles and ensure that they stay engaged and understand what is being taught.



### **More Feedback.**

Teachers have more time to individualize their feedback, ensuring that each student understands the material, gets the help he or she needs, and is reaching his or her potential.

### **Students and Teachers can work One-on-One.**

Students and teachers at EF Academy often work together one-on-one, which gives teachers the opportunity to customize instruction and guidance, and students receive their instructors' and mentors' undivided attention.

### **Ideas are Shared.**

With fewer students in a class, there is more time for them to share their own ideas, express their opinions and describe their perspectives and where these come from, all of which enrich their international education abroad.

## **Large class size.**

McKeachie (1990) mentions that, **the theory of the effects of class size on learning, focusing on how instructors and students behave differently in large and small classes.** Considering this shows that teachers behave completely different in large class because most of the time they may lose the control of the classroom, many times teachers they are stressed and upset when they feel frustrated. In addition, students in small or large class behave different and most of the time is because of the context that they tend to behave rude or in other cases, they feel shy.

It is necessary to mention Monks and Schmidt (2010) studies that have examined students' assessment of a course, universally agree that class size has a negative impact on students' course evaluations, with larger courses receiving statistically significant lower scores than smaller courses. Point out this information, is that having a lot of students in a classroom has a negative impact in their performance because they don't have the physical space for each of them, to get the information they need if there is only one teacher per more than fifty students is not enough to deliver the information accurately and provide the right treatment for each of them.

A huge amount of students in a small classroom is unable to listen the whole class actively and most of the time they do not pay attention to what the teacher is explaining. Furthermore, resources in a large class size are not enough for each of them and they are forced to share their materials and most of the time the lack of furniture forces them to interrupt other classes in order to get a desk. Bandiera et al. (2011).

Carbone and Greenberg, (1998). "I only know the troublemakers since no one else has any reason to see the professor. We should get more information about the students before the class." Taking this into account we can conclude before getting to the classroom is necessary to know a little bit about the students, especially when the class is a large class, because we will have an idea before teaching any content. Here Carbone and Greenberg, "I have taught large classes ... for over 20 years. My experience has been that those efforts were seldom rewarded. My teaching evaluations from several hundred non-majors were placed into a departmental scale developed by faculty teaching a few dozen majors. I was always below the departmental average and yet, very few in the department could do what I do." On the problem of student accountability, "Very serious problem. Some policy on mandatory attendance should be put forth." As we are able to see here,

being a teacher in a big class size is not all the time easy, most of the time is very difficult for the teachers when teaching in a large class size.

Carbone, (1998) theorizes that students in large classes behave badly. Some of the things that can be observed in large classes are:

- Lack of accessibility to students and personal contact.
- Lack of student motivation and preparation for large class format.
- Lack of reward structure for successful large class teaching.
- Lack of accountability in student classroom performance.

There is no one right answer to the question of how much control to exert over the students in a large class. Each faculty member must decide what kinds of behaviors are acceptable in his or her classroom and what kinds of behaviors are intolerable. Do you not mind a few latecomers as long as they take their seats quietly? On the other hand, would you rather students not come at all if they cannot get there on time? Control styles range from authoritarian to laissez-faire. An authoritarian lecturer is likely to march up the aisle toward a student who is about to leave early and ask him, in front of five hundred of his peers, where he is going. The laissez-faire lecturer often does not mind side talking, newspaper reading, or other errant behavior as long as it takes place in the upper tiers of the lecture hall and is not a distraction to the students who have chosen to sit up front. Carbone (1997) also argues that many faculties fall somewhere in between these two ends of the spectrum, is necessary to point this out here because being a teacher in a large class it has more responsibilities than teachers do in a small class size.

## **Class size reduction as an effective option to improve students' performance.**

As Odden, A. and Archibald, S. (2009). Acknowledge that **“One of the strategies that schools deployed to use instructional time more efficiently and effectively was to reduce class sizes. This is a resource-intensive strategy that often requires either extensive reallocation or an infusion of new money”**. When reducing the class size in district schools, it was noticeable a more efficiently and a high improvement in students' performance, and at the same time they were saving money that they could use in order to have more resources for the students. They also proposed, to divide the schools' staff in six categories with the main purpose of analyzing how staffing resources are used in schools and to check the possibilities to relocate those resources:

1. **Classroom teachers:** Teachers who teach the core curriculum to students for most of each day. Core curriculum is usually defined as reading, writing, language, arts, mathematics, science, social studies (history and geography), and in secondary schools, foreign language.
2. **Regular education specialists:** Teachers of subjects outside the core curriculum, such as arts, music, physical education, and library in some time during the time students are in elective classes. In secondary schools, this category includes staff that provides electives such as career-technical, business, family at home, and consumer education.
3. **Categorical-program specialists:** Teachers outside the regular education classroom whose salaries is paid largely by categorical-program dollars, including special education, compensatory education (Title I), bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL), gifted and talented, and other

programs for special needs students. Generally, staffs providing services for children with severe and profound disability are not part of any resource allocation process.

4. **Pupil support specialists:** Professional staff that provides nonacademic support service to students outside the regular education classroom, such as guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, family liaison, community outreach, and nurses.

5. **Aides:** Paraprofessional staff who provide either instructional support (including working one by one-on-one with children both within the regular classroom and in resource rooms) or non-instructional support (including clerical tasks and supervising the cafeteria and/ or playground).

6. **Other:** Any other staff employed by the school, including clerical cafeteria, and custodial workers.

These resources have been successfully implemented in the schools studied and the resulting outcomes have been evident in scores of the students. Nevertheless, any study shows how effective these categorical-program dollars can work in a developing country in Central America. There was also a study on how the resources mentioned above can work within the English language learning and this is what happened: “Another source of categorical-program dollars with potential for resource for reallocation is ESL. Although this possibility only implies to schools with a significant number of students who are English language learners, schools that do not such students often get funding from a combination of local, state, and federal sources. Like compensatory education funds, these funds are often used for pullout programs that are intended to raise student achievement levels.

Monks and Schmidt (2011) concluded that class size specifically a large class size has negative record on students' rates of what they would be learning. Reducing class size will improve the developmental skills and inquisitional learning on the students' performance.

There are some other theorists such as Blatchford, P., Chan, K. W., Galton, M., Lai, K.C. & Lee, J.C. (2016), all of them from different countries around the world, who argue that class size affects students' performance in the book *Class Size: Eastern and Western Perspectives*. (2016). Their most relevant arguments are:

K.W. Chan (2016). Through the creation of a plan named *happy home away from home*, proved that it's easier for students to build a close relationship with each other in small class than in large class. He said "The small class environment has provided a favorable condition whereby the innovations can be easier to implement, sustain, monitor and change when necessary. The small class environment has acted as a catalyst to speed up the steps of success". He also argues that in order to optimize the teaching and learning in the Hong Kong primary schools, the government initiated a policy with class sized reduced from 30-35 students to 25 students, to enhance the learning and teaching in the primary schools. Concluding finally saying that small class environment of the school has provided an optimal condition for the activities to be realized more effectively.

In addition to K. W. Chan (2016), Celeste Y.M. Yuen (2016) cited Stasz and Stecher (2000) who said "Previous studies on class size reduction have shown many benefits of smaller classes, for instance, offering more individualize learning opportunities facilitating greater academic and cognitive development (Stasz and Stecher, 2000) and promoting active learning of students

“(Blatchford, et al., 2005). She also cited Galton and Pell (2009) who believe that same pedagogical principles are applicable to both small and regular class sizes.

Furthermore, Peter Blatchford (2016) said “Pupils in smaller classes tend to perform better than those in larger classes”. To support his theory, he also said that John Hattie suggested, plausibly, that changing from a larger class of 30 students to a smaller one of 15-20 students should allow a move from direct (most often knowledge- transmission) teaching of students, to co-working with a cohort of individual students teaching and learning, with expected beneficial effects on students learning. “There are insights into ways in which class size affects the nature of classroom interaction somehow subtle but still important ways.

Gary Harfitt, for example, shows, and in line with Robin Alexander’s (2004) work on pedagogy, that more interactive style on teaching is easier in smaller classes.” Blatchford (2016).

Fewer studies still have examined the impact of class size on student performance in higher education. Bandiera et al. (2009) said that “examine administrative records from a leading UK 7 university and find a significant negative, but highly non-linear effect of class size on student tests results”. They ended up saying that changes in class size have a significant impact on student either positive or negative and the performance but only at the very top and bottom of the class size distribution. Furthermore, they find that students at the top of the grade distribution are most negatively affected by class size, particularly in large class sections. They rule out class size effects being due to non-random assignment of faculty across class size, student self-selection into class size, omitted inputs, or changes in grading policies based on class size. Similarly, Kokkelenberg et al. (2008) find that average grades decline significantly with class size at a public northeastern

U.S. university. They find that grades drop dramatically with class size up to twenty students, and less steeply but nonetheless monotonically thereafter.

## **The Impact of Large Classrooms on Teachers' Practice**

The Impact of Large Classrooms on Teachers' Practice Large classrooms can negatively affect two significant and interrelated aspects of teacher practice – instructional time and classroom management. Regarding the former, there is research to suggest that teachers in larger classrooms devote less time to math instruction and integrated reading and writing tasks (Wilson, 2006). Other research indicates teachers in smaller classes are more likely cover a range of subjects, such as current affairs, history, geography, and social studies (Holloway, 2002). Large classes take a toll on the teacher's ability to manage time, requiring more time to be devoted to instructions

Impact of Large Classrooms on Students Class size has many effects on students' engagement, behavior, and student retention. Finn (2003) reviewed studies that examined the link between student engagement and class size. He conceptualizes student engagement in two forms: social engagement and academic engagement. Social engagement refers to how a student interacts socially with other students and teachers in either pro- or anti-social ways. Academic engagement refers to a student's attitude towards schooling and the learning process. Finn (2003) concludes that when students are placed in smaller classes they become more engaged, both academically and socially. With strong social and academic engagement, he argues, academic achievement increases.



# **Improving Educational Quality in the Face of Large Classrooms.**

The repertoire of effective teaching practices for overcrowded classes is often described as limited. That is, the methods that teachers can use in a large classroom are not as plentiful as Large Class Sizes in the Developing World: What Do We Know and What Can We Do. Those available to teachers in small classes. There is some truth in this statement. In small classes, teachers are able to practice a variety of methods, such as learning centers, higher order questioning, and other active-learning approaches. Furthermore, teachers are more likely to provide individualized attention in small classes (Wilson, 2006). Teaching in large classes, however, tends not to be a topic covered in most teacher education coursework. The result is that teachers are left unprepared for the unique challenges faced in the large classroom. However, as detailed later in this report, there are a host of methods that teachers can make use of when teaching in large classes. Among these are small group discussions, peer tutoring, and shift teaching. Even whole class instruction (i.e., lecturing to the entire class) can be an effective practice depending on the learning goals (e.g., memorization of formulas, vocabulary, etc.).

## **Class size matters.**

According to Karen Akerhielm, (1995) there is a negative relationship between class size and students' achievements where it is found this information that was supported by two instruments she used she said, "*results indicated a significant and negative relationship between class size and student achievement*". In relation to this information, she was checking the scores in different subjects such as Mathematics, Sciences, English and History. She could comprehend

that this relationship affects student's performance probably a lower degree but it influences on the outcomes or results academically on students' achievements.

There are several ideas supporting that there is in reality an influence on students' performance due to the class size issue many authors such as (Bedard & Kuhn, 2008; Cuseo, 2007; Monks & Schmidt, 2011). Feldman (1984), have said, **“In the current study, we argue that with the inclusion of pedagogical activities such as online peer-assessment assignments, students can feel engaged and connected to the community of learners despite class size. Several studies have also noted that class size has a negative impact on student evaluations for instance; found that large classes tend to have a significantly negative influence on student ratings of teaching, especially on ratings of the instructor's effectiveness and facilitative skills”**. It is notorious that this is being support with strong investigation, which helps to proof how class size influences students' achievements making people to be aware of this phenomenon to try to find a solution.

## **Class Size Effects: New Insights into Classroom, School and Policy Processes**

Blatchford, Bassett and Brown showed that as class sizes became smaller there were more times when students were the focus of a teacher's attention, and more times when they were engaged in active interaction with teachers. This effect was found for all groups at both primary and secondary levels. Classroom engagement effects were most marked for low attaining secondary students. The effect of smaller class sizes on individualized attention in particular, appears to be a robust finding that extends right through the school years and can be used to accelerate more differentiation of the curriculum.

## **Teaching large classes: problems and suggested techniques**

M. Rhalmi (2013) said Teachers often complain, not without reason, about teaching large classes. These unlucky teachers not only suffer from the pedagogical shortcomings of large classes, but also from the stress these classes produce.

It is difficult to set a definition of what a large class is. In some countries, a class with 30 students is not considered at all problematic. In other countries, however, such a class would be challenging for teachers. Some teachers have to face even more than 40 (in some Moroccan schools a class may include 50 students).

### **Problems with large classes.**

- One of the main difficulties that a teacher may experience while teaching a large class is the tremendous effort that she or he will have to make. With an outnumbered class there is always something to be done.
  
- With a large class, it is difficult to get a satisfactory knowledge of student's needs. Intimacy with students and remembering names might be a problem.
  
- As a consequence of the large number of students, the noise level is inevitably high which adds to the stress teachers may experience.
  
- Organizing, planning and presenting lessons, may constitute another challenge for teachers in such classes as students' abilities might differ considerably.

- There is another difficulty related to the learning process. In fact, engaging learners actively in the learning process may not be easy in a crowded class.
- It is hard to imagine how a large class would benefit from school resources such as computers, books, references...
- With a crowded classroom, teachers might find it difficult to measure effectiveness.
- A large class gives reluctant students a place to hide.

### **Tips to teach appropriate in a large class.**

- First it would be a great idea to train students to work in small groups of five to seven students. And when working in groups, it would be beneficial for students to sit around in a circle so that everyone could have a chance to participate.
- Groups should include fewer members to avoid any of the students coasting. It is important to find active roles for students to avoid them being lazy.
- Pair work may be also a good alternative to practice conversations, exercises and other language activities.

- Pairing weaker students with stronger ones might be an option unless you fear the weaker students feel intimidated.
  
- Changing the classroom desk arrangement to take into consideration the large number of students is a good idea. Finding out the right arrangement is up to the teachers' creativity and classroom size. Anyway, desk placements should make cooperative work easier.
  
- To optimize your work with students with learning difficulties, give them seats in front of you, closer to you so that you can spot difficulties easily while teaching.
  
- To reduce stress and noise level, set simple rules for class management.
  1. Establish simple rules of acceptable behavior for everybody to observe when working in groups, in pairs or individually.
  2. Train your students to deal with classroom chores:
    - a. getting into and out of the classroom at the start and end of lesson or during break.
    - b. handing out books, papers, and other materials to contribute with their speaking skills
    - c. putting away school materials at the end of the lesson.
  
- Teachers in large classes may also want to delegate some of the work to more capable students. These can play the role of teachers' assistants.
  
- Another measure that might be effective for some teachers is to split the class into weak students and more able students. This would make it possible for the teacher to concentrate

on the weaker students. However, this should be done with a lot of caution so as not to affect weaker students' self-esteem.

- Why not use technology? Technology ensures that everyone has time to connect with the teacher. For instance, teachers may plan to do the following:

1. A large class will be better off with a blog or a wiki where students and the teachers could meet at home and interaction between them is important to be part of a society.

2. Using students' emails would make it easier for teachers to connect with students off class.

These classes involve, most of the times, mixed abilities, language levels, motivation, needs, interests, and goals. Nevertheless, teaching and managing such classes is possible if steps such as those described above are taken.

The influence of large classes in the English language teaching learning process in Ecuadorian high schools.

This research analyzed the influence of large classes in the English language teaching –learning process in Ecuadorian high schools. During the field research, five classes were observed to identify the instructional, social, and psychological implications that large classes have on the teaching - learning process. This study was carried out in five public and private high schools located in the city of Jipijapa, in the province of Manabí, Ecuador in 2013. The sample consisted of students from 8th to 10th year of basic education, where each class has more than 35 students.

The methods used in this research were quantitative and qualitative in order to obtain accurate information about the main implications that influence the English language teaching-learning process in large classes. The results of this research show that the factors that influence the English language teaching-learning process are lack of skills in managing learning, class size, among others. The obtained results will benefit teachers and students who are involved in the teaching learning process because they will have better opportunities in their academic and professional lives.

### **Teaching Approaches and Methods**

There are different approaches and methods that teachers may use during the development of their classes, and these are applied according to the objectives of each lesson. One of these methods is the Total Physical Response which is a language teaching method built around the coordination of speech and action. According to Richards and Rodgers (2011), the purpose of this method is to use body movements for helping students to comprehend the meaning of the target language. The method was developed by Asher who observed that children learn a language from interpreting the physical gestures associated with the words they listen from adults. In the same way, he believes that this process can be applied in adults in order to facilitate their learning and it can also reduce learner's stress that people feel when studying a foreign language.

Another approach used by teachers to teach English in the classroom is the Communicative Language Teaching. According to Hymes (1972), when a person gets communicative competence he or she acquires both knowledge and ability for language use. Thus, teachers are facilitators who use a lot of real world material to encourage learners to communicate each other using the target language.

Moreover, language forms are selected according to learner's needs. In that way, learners are able to identify the most commonly used structures that will allow them to communicate in a natural environment. In addition, Littlewood (1981) distinguished the activities in Communicative Language Teaching between functional communication activities and social interactive activities; the first one incorporates tasks such as comparing sets of pictures, following directions and solving problems; the second one contains activities such as discussion session dialogues, debates and role plays. In this way, the teacher encourages students to practice and develop communicative skills.

Another important approach which serves as an instrument for teachers is the Whole Language Approach which emphasizes the learning process in reading and writing skills. Richards and Rodgers (2011) mention that the learning theory is based on the humanistic and constructivist schools, as a result, constructivist learners "create meaning," "learn by doing" and work collaboratively "in mixed groups on common projects." At the same time, the teacher is a facilitator, who creates a climate that will carry collaborative learning process; another characteristic of this approach is that teachers prefer to use real- world material than commercial texts as newspapers, storybooks etc, encourage to work in cooperative learning process in small groups of reading and writing activities, where the students are also evaluators, evaluating themselves and others" learning, with the help of their teacher.

Similarly, another approach which involves cooperative activities in pairs and small groups of learners is Cooperative Language Learning, because learning English depends on the socially structured information exchange between learners' groups and in which each learner cheers up herself/himself and can encourage to their partners in order to increase their learning. Olsen and Kagan (1992) consider that with this approach the teacher builds a positive relationship among



students, focuses his attention into language structures, and communicative functions through the interactive tasks that he/she uses. In this way, learners can increase their motivation and reduce their stress.

Regarding the Content – Based Instruction (CBI), Brown (2002, p.234) claims that "content- based language teaching integrates the learning of some specific subject- matter content with the learning of a second language". According to the author, learners acquire knowledge not only about the language but also about the contents being taught such as geography, culture, history, or math; in integrated skills. In the same way, Larsen (2000) describes that during the language class, the language teacher focuses on helping students process the language in order to understand the academic content presented by the subject teacher; in fact, teachers help students to complete academic tasks such as writing term papers, improving their note-taking abilities, and reading academic textbooks assigned by the teacher.

**Concerning the Task- Based Language Teaching (TBLT)**, it uses communicative tasks in which learners have to demonstrate their level of knowledge of the language; meaning, communication, task completion and assessment, which are important aspects that teachers have to take into consideration. Moreover, Pica, Kanagy, and Falondun (1993) consider that tasks can be classified according to the type of interaction that occurs in task accomplishment, for instance, Jigsaw tasks, Information-gap tasks, problem-solving tasks, decision-making tasks, and opinion exchange tasks, which will be done in pairs, or small groups.

In contrast with the previous methods which include interactive activities and develop the four skills, there is a method that increases only reading and writing skills; this method is called "Grammar- Translation". Richards and Rodgers (2001) mention that Grammar translation is a way

of studying a language through the analysis of its grammar rules, memorization and lists of vocabulary with the purpose of applying this knowledge of translating sentences and text into and out of the target language.

In brief, there are different methods and approaches that are useful for teachers and they can be applied according to the teaching objective of a lesson.

The amount of students in a classroom is a factor that teachers need to consider in order to plan a lesson. In this respect, Mayer (2000, p. 31) claims "that the way teachers implement the course content, instructional pedagogy, and technology used in the classroom may all be influenced by the number of students in the class." A long debate in class size support small classes especially with students that come from lower social and economic backgrounds. The author considers that students learn better in small classes because teachers are able to use techniques and pedagogy effectively. An interesting point mentioned refers to the limited number of research done about the effects of class size in the teaching process. Studies have focused frequently on the relationship between class size and teachers' ability to deal with disciplinary problems.

### **Different levels of proficiency**

One of the biggest problems teachers confront are classes where the students are at different levels, where some with quite competent English competed, some whose English isn't very good, and some whose English is only just getting started. According to Harmer (2007, p.176), teachers "regularly face mixed-ability groups where different individuals are at different levels and have different abilities. What are the possible ways of dealing with this situation?". According to the author, the differentiation, in other words, treating some students differently from others is possible

by using different material and technology, encouraging students to do different tasks depending on their abilities, for example, while one group is working on a piece of language study, the other group might be reading a story or doing Internet-based research. Later, while better groups are discussing a topic, the weaker group or groups might be doing a parallel writing exercise, or sitting round a CD player listening to an audio track.

Some teachers adopt a strategy of peer help and teaching so that better students can help the weaker ones. However, this has to be done with great sensitivity so that students do not feel alienated by their over-knowledgeable peers or oppressed by their teaching role.

Similarly, Scrivener (2005) mentions the most common reasons why there are many learners' level, as when students are grouping by age, and this seems very likely to lead to problems if some learners are significantly stronger or weaker than others; another typical problem in many schools is caused by the fact that it is often less troublesome for school administration to keep learners together as a class, because learners will progress at different speeds. This means that, even if a group was similar in level at the beginning of a course, there may be very different exit levels" at the end. The author also states the placement procedures as another cause of 'mixed-level' problems, because the placement testers sometimes give priority to friendship or personal requirements rather than place students according to real level obtained in the placement test.

Besides, in many cases learners may be together in the same class because the school does not have sufficient levels to fine-tune the classes more. Scrivener (2005, p. 68) says that "If we check the overall abilities of each person, we find some are 'weak Pre-Intermediate', some 'mid-Pre-Intermediate' and some 'strong Pre-Intermediate', maybe there are even some people who seem to belong to another level classification, say 'Elementary' or 'Intermediate'." In some cases, learners

have good knowledge in grammar, and their vocabulary is a little weaker, but their speaking and listening are very much poorer.

To conclude with the literature review, it is necessary to examine a series of studies regarding the influence of large classes in the English language teaching –learning that were developed in different parts of the world.

Firstly, Yetunde (1999) did a research to identify the major problems caused by overpopulated classes in Nigeria with a view to making suggestions that could help to alleviate the problems. He applied a simple random sampling technique where eight schools were selected out of thirty secondary schools in the township. However, two types of instruments were used. One involved the use of class registers to obtain pupil enrolment by classroom and the second instrument was a questionnaire made by the researcher to determine the most serious effect of over-crowded classroom on teacher - student interactions.

In this study, the author concluded that seating arrangement in overpopulated classes limits the quality and quantity of interactions between teachers and students. Other issues that include punishment as a negative reinforcement is not an educationally expedient, these are direct results of poor quality training of teachers.

The second study was done by Adeyemi (2008) in order to examine the influence class-size had on the quality of output from secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The instrument used for collecting data for the study was an inventory. Based on this finding, it is concluded that class-size is a critical factor in determining the quality of output from secondary schools in Ekiti State,

Nigeria. Students in schools having small class-sizes had better quality of output than students in schools having large class-sizes.

The researcher recommended that the State Government should build more classrooms in all schools. In doing this, much emphasis should be given to the provision of more classrooms in the annual capital budget. Likewise, the approved teacher quota of one and one - half teacher per class should be allowed to remain but should be properly used in the distribution of teachers to school.

The third study was carried out by Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Lyamu (2006) who investigated whether teaching methods, teaching resources, and classroom physical space had some influence in the English teaching- learning process. This study was performed with senior secondary students from five public schools in Nigeria; they answered a questionnaire with questions related to the aims of the research. In addition, the researchers observed classes in each high school to analyze the type of methods and resources used to teach English; students' attitude towards the language, and behavior in the classroom was also observed.

The analysis of the questionnaires showed that students did not feel comfortable in the classrooms, and they complained about the lack of space and amount of students. As a result of the observations, researchers found that classes were teacher-centered and traditional materials (textbooks, chalkboard) were used to teach English classes. At the end of the study, the researchers concluded that the English teaching process did not have a good quality and this caused that students did not perform well in university language tests because of their poor skills.

The fourth study was performed by Blatchford, Bassett, Goldstein and Martin (2003) who studied whether class size differences affect pupils' academic achievement; and the connections between

class size and classroom processes, which might explain any differences found. The information was collected from classes in terms of class size (as on the school register, and also in terms of the number of children in the class at a given point in the term, too the information on teachers in the study was collected from self-completed questionnaires called "experienced" class size). The method comprised whole class and selected child observations in terms of event sampling of significant events; semi-structured interviews with teachers and the principal.

The results showed that there was a clear effect of class size differences on children's academic attainment over the (first) reception year. In the case of literacy, the lowest attainers on entry to school benefited most from small classes, particularly below 25. Connections between class size and classroom processes were examined and a summary model of relationships presented. Effects were multiple, not singular. In large classes there are many large groups and this presented teachers with more difficulties. On the other hand, in smaller classes there was more individual teacher contact with pupils and more support for learning, and in larger classes there was more pupil inattentiveness and off-task behavior.

At the end of this study researchers concluded that much will depend on how teachers adapt their teaching to different class sizes and that could be done in teacher training and professional development to address contextual features such as class size.

The fifth study was done by Thaher (2005) who determined what effects (instructional, psychological or social) large classes have on students by investigating and analyzing EFL students' attitudes toward large classes at An-Najah National University in Palestine. A questionnaire was applied according to a random distribution in English. The sample of the study consisted of 230 non-English major EFL students.

The findings of the study revealed that instructional effects have the highest mean over the social and the psychological effect. It appeared that despite the negative aspect of learning English in large classes, there can be some positive aspects that teachers could make use of.

### **The Problem of Overcrowded Classes in Learning English as a Foreign Language**

The globalization of English language has led to significant growth in the enrollment of students who either study English as a second or foreign language from various non English speaking countries. At university level, this has led to increase the number and size of large classes. This descriptive study mainly aims at identifying the problems that English teachers at Mohamed Kheider University face while teaching overcrowded classes of about 50-60 learners and the strategies they employ to achieve specific outcomes in the English classroom. So, in order to gain deeper understanding of the impact of large classes on EFL teaching and learning, an interview was designed and conducted with six EFL teachers. Besides, classroom observation with first year. The results of the research instrument revealed that noise making, assessment, student-teacher interactions and lack of space are the most common problems. Based on the results, our hypothesis was confirmed; EFL learning should be carried in reduced classes of no more than 25 students per class so as to create successful EFL environment. Nowadays, learning English as a foreign language has become a very sophisticated task. An effective teaching and learning process is based on the teacher, the students, and the classroom where the teaching-learning process takes place. In a Foreign language context, there are many factors that hamper the educational process such as: discipline problems, classroom management challenges, and overcrowded classes. This latter is considered among the social factors that affect education negatively. According to the National Council of Teachers of English Guidelines (1987, p.8), the reference number of students should

not exceed 25 learners per class. Unfortunately, in the English division at Biskra university, learning EFL has been invaded by crowd of people and classes cannot contain the minimum number required for language teaching classes. This number ranges from 50-60 students and can lead to teaching problems that can be spatial, pedagogical, management till achievement problems. As a result, these problems not only affect students learning but also affect their final outcomes. Not only that, teachers cannot establish an effective teaching environment where the number of learners exceeds the normal standard. For these reasons, this study stresses basically on how reducing the number of students in class can improve their performance. The current research is an attempt to demonstrate the drawbacks of overcrowded classes on teaching and learners' proficiency in the target language.

## **Ways to overcome the challenges of large class size.**

**In schools across the country, large class size has become the rule, rather than the exception, creating management issues for many teachers.**

As class sizes increase across the country, teachers find themselves faced with challenges that stem from managing many more students than should be in one classroom with a single educator. Many problems can arise when teachers are forced to not only teach and remain abreast of advancements in their subjects, but also attempt to engage with 25, 30, or even 40 students, as their large class size becomes larger.

These issues can manifest as discord between students and a teacher, or disharmony between classmates. Quiet, introverted, or easily intimidated students might blend into the background of a large class size, becoming forgotten members of a classroom.



As education funding is reduced, or not allocated properly, and the teacher shortage continues to diminish the amount of dedicated, qualified educators, the remaining teaching professionals are going to be worn thin as they are made responsible for more students. With classes that are too big, some students are more likely to compete with teachers for class attention by assuming the role of clown in an attempt to grab the spotlight. The frustration caused by large class size often leads to teacher burnout.

“Students are unpredictable, and kids need attention. In smaller classes, you can give them the attention they need. You can allow them to express themselves and you don’t have to make them be quiet so that others get a chance to speak. It isn’t our job to simply have to make them be quiet so that others get a chance to speak. It is not our job to simply make kids memorize information and regurgitate it on the multiple choice tests, but rather to encourage their participation in classes and society.”

There are ways that teachers can begin pushing back against the trend of large class size. Through using a few different tactics, teachers can begin easing this burden and focus on child development and student achievement.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **RESEARCH DESIGN:**

To research purpose the researchers will develop different instrument that allows them to get the needed data about **“How class size influences the speaking skills of the students in the Reading and Conversation in English I courses at the Foreign Languages Department of Universidad de El Salvador, semester II - 2017”**.

#### **Research type:**

To meet the objectives set an explorative research was developed which provided a general idea about the how class size influences the speaking skills of the students enrolled in the Reading and Conversation I courses.

Explorative researches are made with little-known topics, like the one we are studying, so that the data results provide relevant insight about the objectives, what means, they give superficial but essential knowledge.

#### **Research Level:**

Researchers believe that an explorative research allows to get new and relevant data about **“How the class size influence the speaking skills of students in the Reading and Conversation I courses at the Foreign Languages Department of Universidad de El Salvador, semester II 2017”** that can be useful for new research on the area and to be applied by teachers.

## **RESEARCH METHOD:**

The research method used was the scientific one because it has different postulates, rules and norms to carry out the study and provides more solutions for the research problem. In general, it is a set of procedures that utilize the necessary instruments and techniques to study and solve the investigation problems like “**how the class size influence the speaking skill of students in the Reading and Conversation I courses at the Foreign Languages Department of Universidad de El Salvador, semester II 2017**”.

### **Unit of Analysis:**

- Students in the second semester 2017 enrolled in Reading and Conversation I courses at Universidad de El Salvador.
- The specialized teachers in charge of Reading and Conversation I courses at Universidad de El Salvador, semester II 2017.

## **Population**

The authors of the present research are going to carry out the study with students enrolled in the Reading and Conversation I courses at Universidad de El Salvador, semester II 2017.

## **The Sampling**

To select the sample researchers have selected two small groups and two large groups of the Reading and Conversation I courses.

Sampling selection:

The population studied is approximately of 250 students enrolled in 8 different groups of Reading and Conversation I courses, semester II 2017 at Universidad de El Salvador.

Researchers restricted the study in:

Two large groups were considered: group 1 from 8:00 am to 10:00 am Monday and Wednesday which has 39 students enrolled and group number 2 from 8:00 am to 10:00 am Tuesday and Thursday which has 36 students enrolled.

Two small groups were taken into account: group number 6 from 4:00 pm to 6:00 p.m. Monday and Wednesday which has 22 students enrolled and group number 8 from 8:00 a. m. to 10:00 a.m. Monday and Wednesday which has 19 students enrolled. Researchers studied and analyzed these groups finding influences generated by class size issue.

Surveys were administered to students of the selected groups to know their point of view or perspective related to the issue in question. Besides, interviews were passed to the teachers in charge of those groups that were studied in order to gather a professional and expert opinion about how class size influences the speaking skills of the students in Reading and Conversation I courses. As well, researchers developed some check lists with teacher's permission, to observe how class size affects the students when they interact in their Reading and Conversation I courses.

## **DATA GATHERING PROCESS**

In order to collect the data was necessary to answer to the research questions, some instruments were implemented: Surveys with a question guide to be developed with students, Interviews with open questions guide for a professional to gather an expert opinion in that area were included. Besides that, a check list with specific criteria let researchers to analyze the class environment according to their size.

**a. Research instruments and techniques:**

- **Survey.**

- a series of written questions a participant answer. This method gathers responses to questions that are essay or agree/neutral/disagree style.
- The instrument used for this technique was the question guide. It includes a group of questions designed to collect the data required for the research and include appropriate instructions to be answered in the correct way.

- **Interview.**

- Questions posed to an individual to obtain information about him or her. This type of survey is like a job interview, with one person asking another a load of questions.
- For this research, purpose some teachers specialized in the field will be interviewed. The instrument used to get the data is going to be a direct question guide.

- **Class observation.**

- Researchers to evaluate the students' behavior during the reading and Conversation I class at the Universidad de El Salvador use this technique.
- Checklists were used to evaluate how the speaking skills are influenced during the class. Researchers evaluated throughout a checklist, the students' performance in the area relating to their speaking skills.

- **Setting:**

This research study took place in the Foreign Language Department at Universidad de El Salvador.

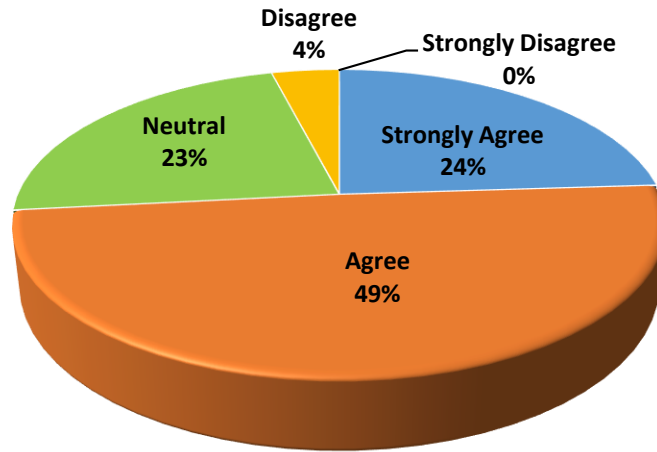
## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Data Analysis.**

The researchers administered surveys to four groups to all students' present large and small groups were taken into account of Modern Language Department who were taking Reading and Conversation I courses, Semester II, 2017. In order to find out the different points of view from student towards the topic on how class size influences the speaking skills of the students in the Reading and Conversation I in English courses at the Foreign Languages Department of Universidad de El Salvador.



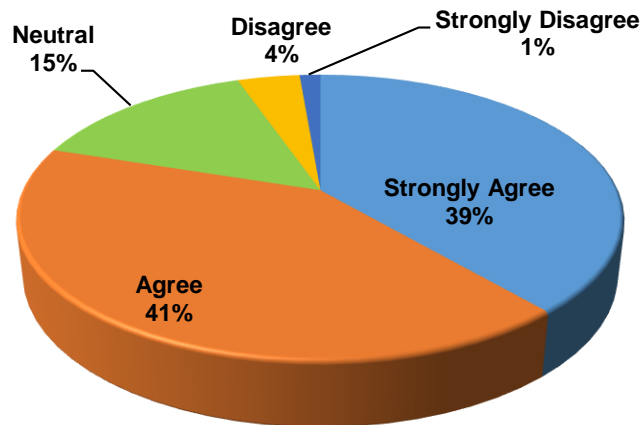
## 1. Does class size influence in the classroom to develop your speaking skills?



■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

In question number one, 49% of the students agree that class size influences in the classroom to develop speaking skills while 24% strongly agree. Therefore, almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of students agree that exists an influence by class size. Besides, 23% shows neutral decision towards the situation since they did not give an opinion about it. On the other hand, 4% of students disagree that class size influences in their speaking skills whereas any student selected the option strongly disagree which means that the majority of the students considered that class size influences in the development of their speaking skills.

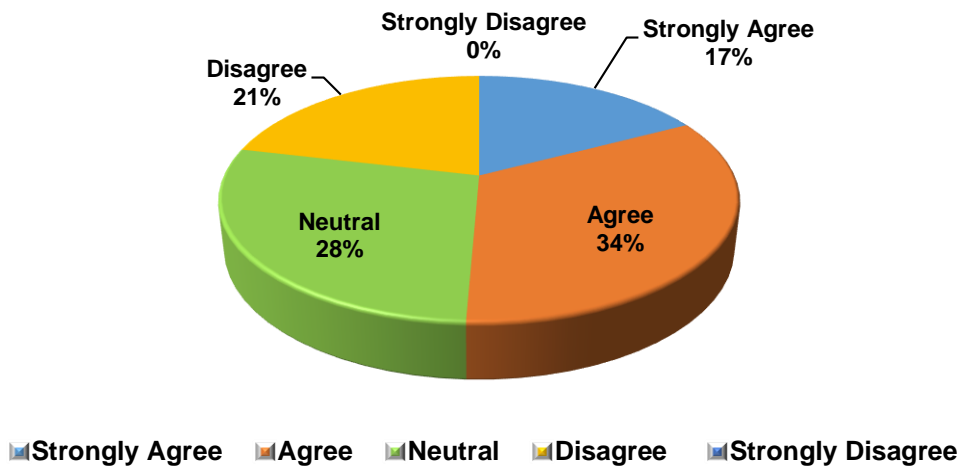
## 2. Can teachers have more time to individualize their feedback in small classes?



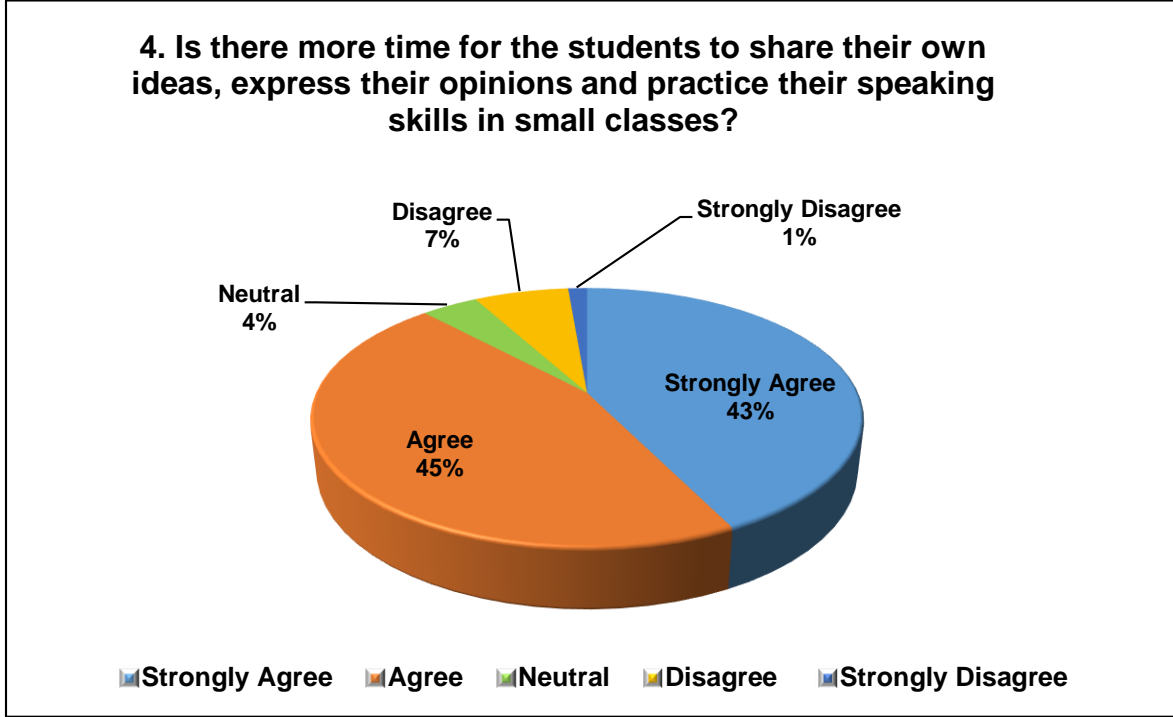
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

In question number two, 41% of the students are in agreement supporting as a result of their answer that teachers have more time to individualize their feedback in small classes while 39% strongly agree. Making a total of 80% of the population expressing that feedback is better provided to each student since there is more time in small courses than large courses. Also, 15% shows neutral decision towards this question. On the other side, 4% of the students disagree that teachers have more time to provide individualized feedback to each student while 1% strongly disagree. As a result, we concluded with these percentages that feedback is better provided to each student in small classes.

**3. Can teachers spend more time teaching the material and less time getting the attention of those who get distracted in small classes?**

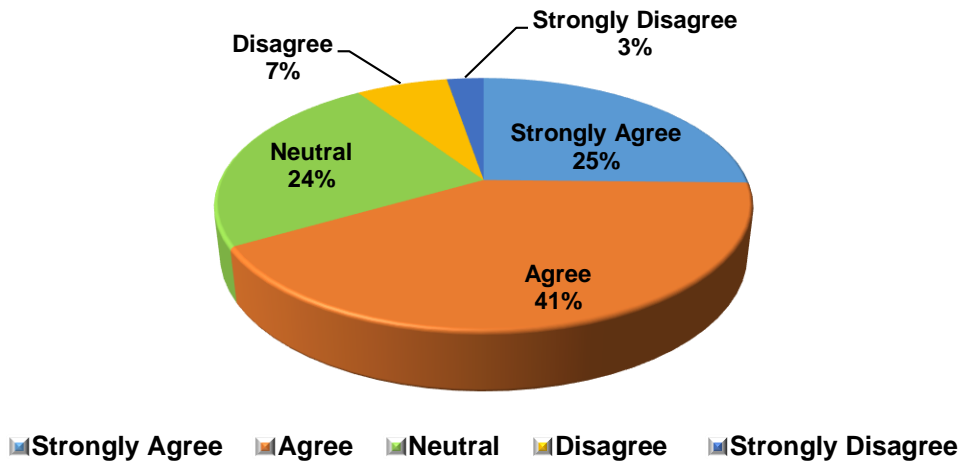


In question number three, more than the half of the students polled are agree or strongly agree that teachers can spend more time teaching the material instead of being getting the attention for those who get distracted easily. Furthermore, 28% shows neutral decision either agree or disagree towards the issue. On the other hand, 21% of students disagree that teachers spend more time on the material instead of getting the attention for distracted students while any student strongly disagrees. Not even a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of population think teachers spend more time teaching the content other than paying attention to those who do not.



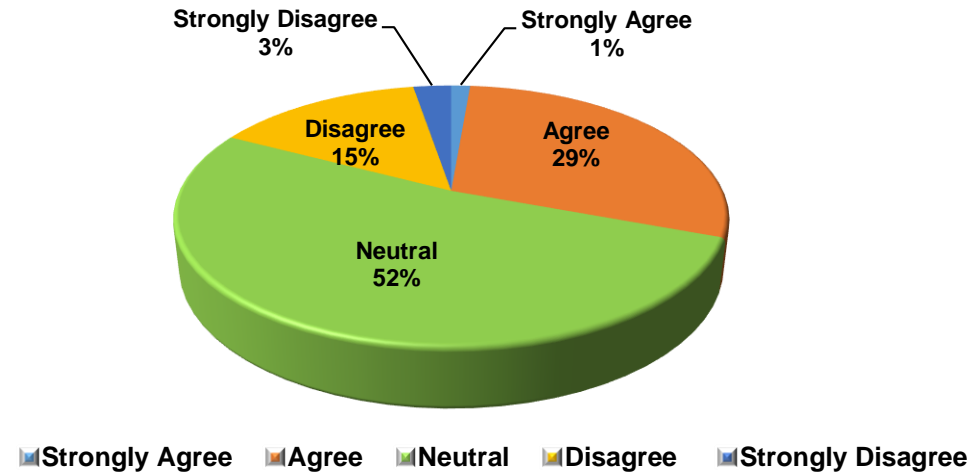
In question number four, 45% of the population agree that there is more time for the students to share their ideas, whereas 43% strongly agree making a total of 88% supporting the point of view that students can express their ideas and practice their speaking skills properly in small groups. Also, 4% took a neutral decision towards the question. On the other side, the 7% of students disagree that there is more time for the students to share their ideas, express their opinions and practice their speaking skills while 1% strongly disagree. The minority of students consider there is not more than in small groups to express ideas, share opinions and practice speaking skills in small groups.

**5. Do students have higher grades and perform better in their speaking skills in smaller classes?**



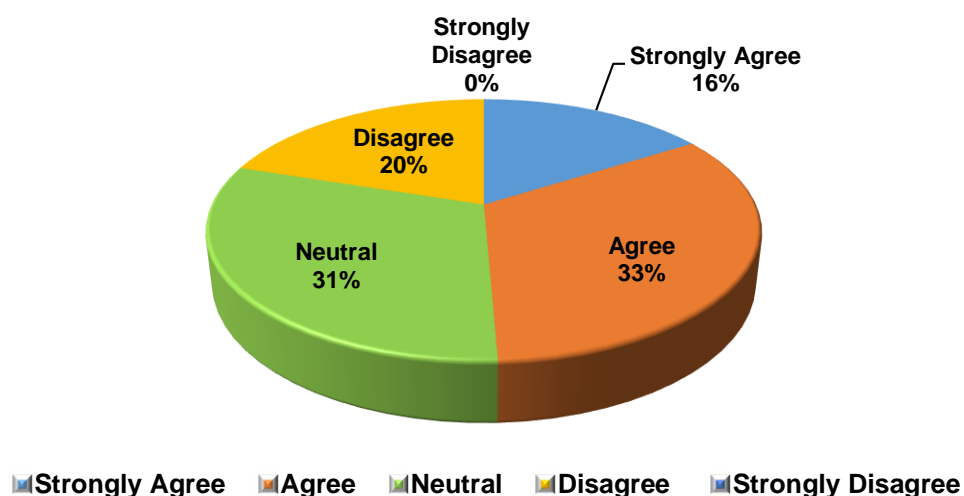
In question number five, 41% of the students agree that students get higher grades in small classes and 25% strongly agree. According to the data, 66% of the population surveyed are in agreement that students and perform better in their speaking skills. Besides, 24% answered neutral option towards the question. On the other hand, 7% of students disagree that students get higher grades and perform better in their speaking skills while 3% strongly disagree. Meaning that 8% of student consider higher grade and better performance is not linked to a small group.

**6. Do students fail Reading and Conversation courses due to lack of commitment to participate in large classes?**



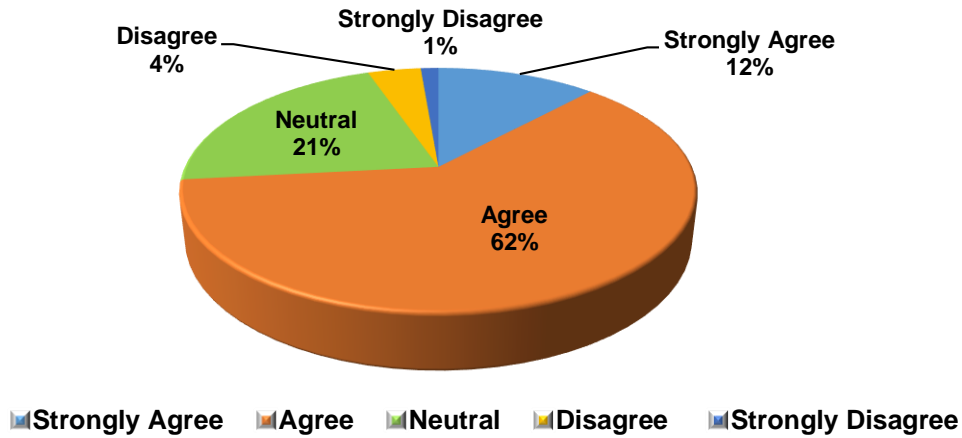
In question number six, 29% of the students agree that students fail Reading and Conversation courses due to lack of commitment to participate in large classes while 1% strongly agree. Meaning that in total 30% of the students consider that is not the class size the responsible of failing the subject but the lack of commitment to participate. In addition, 52% took a neutral decision towards the question. The half of the population did not have any intention to agree or disagree about it. On the other hand, 15% of students disagree that they fail due to the lack of participation in class while 3% strongly disagree.

**7. Do Large classes make discussion and group work more difficult especially in Reading and Conversation I in English?**



In question number seven, 33% of the students agree that large classes make discussion and group work difficult especially in Reading and Conversation I in English while 16% strongly agree which tell us that almost the half of the population thinks make discussions and group work is more difficult in large classes. Furthermore, 31% took a neutral decision towards the question. On the contrary, 20% of students disagree that discussions and group work is more difficult in large classes while 0% strongly disagree. They consider class size is not a factor to avoid group work or discussions in the classroom.

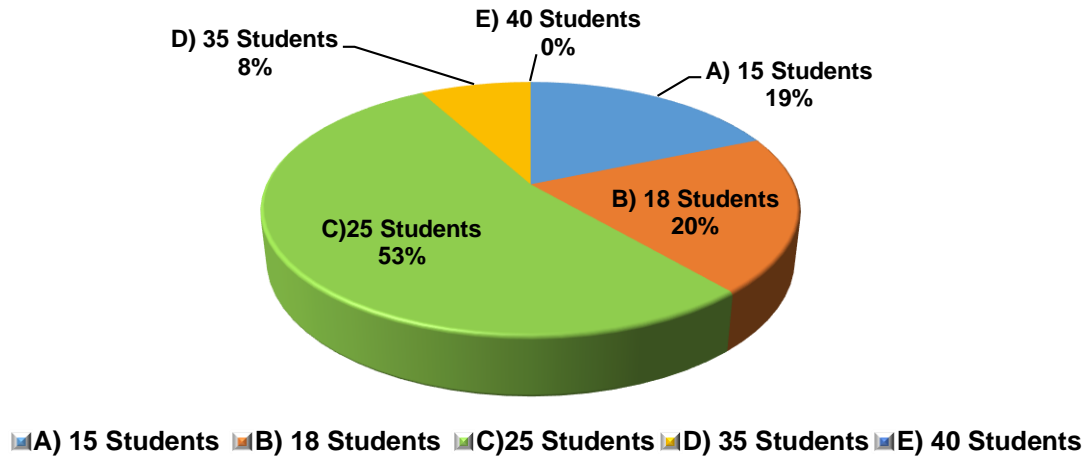
**8. Is it easier for a student to get distracted due to the lack of engagement in large classes?**



In question number eight, 62% of students agree that it is easier to get distracted due to the lack of engagement in large classes while 12% strongly agree. Comprehending that almost a  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the population support the idea that students get distracted easier in large classes. Moreover, 21% took a neutral decision towards the question. On the contrary, 4% of students disagree that it is easier to get distracted and not having engagement in the class in large groups while 1% strongly disagree.

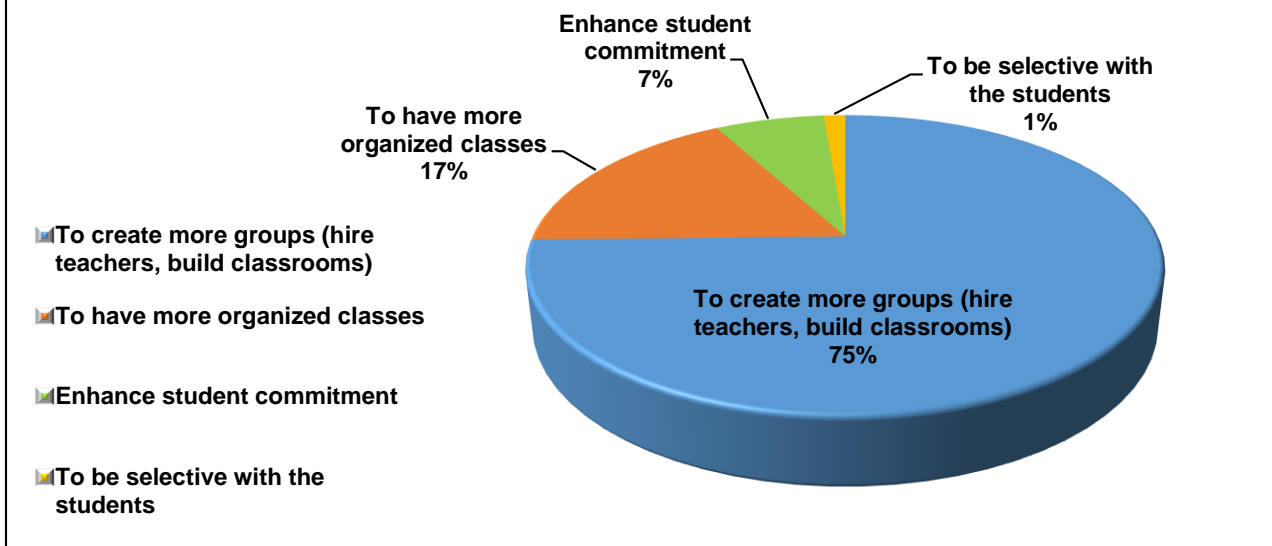


**9. According to you, what is the most appropriate number of students in the Reading and Conversation I in English course?**



In question number nine, students shared their opinion, 53% of students consider that the most appropriate number of students in the reading and Conversation I course in English is 25 students while 20% consider 18 students is the best option. Consequently, they concluded the most suitable choice is between 18 – 25 students that should be enrolled in Reading and Conversation I course in English. Moreover, the 19% of students polled think the best choice is 15 students enrolled in this subject while 8% said 35 students is the most suitable number to arrange a class while 0% of student considered 40 students may be an option to be considered in a group.

**10. In your opinion, what would be the best suggestions to reduce class size influence affecting your speaking skills?**



In this question, Students expressed some of the suggestions to provide a solution to the issue, the  $\frac{3}{4}$  of student think of creating more groups as an alternative to resolve the problem while 17% consider is better to have more organized classes to distribute students properly. As well, 7% answered to enhance the student’s commitment will resolve the problem. One student which represents the 1% said that the University should be more selective with the students that will take this course.

• **Interview analysis.**

This technique is used to get the qualitative data, and is based on dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee with the purpose of getting essential data. Since the interview administered to teacher presented open questions we needed to apply a comparative chart to analysis their answers mostly the similitudes and differences.

| <b>1) Do you think that class size is important in Reading and Conversation I courses in the speaking skill field?.</b>  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| Teacher 1  | Teacher 2   | Teacher 3  | Teacher 4  |
| It is important because this course is basically to give students the chance to participate.   | Yes, it is important because the fewer students in a class the more they participate. | Yes, because students need personalized courses to have better results relating their speaking skills. | Yes, it is important. To have less students is good to give an appropriate feedback. |
| Conclusion.  |   |  |  |
| As a result, all the teacher were in agreement and provided similar answers saying that class size is important in the Reading and Conversation I courses in the speaking field. |   |  |  |

| <b>2) Do you consider you can provide feedback to each student relating their speaking skills in small and large groups in the same way?</b>  |  |   |                                  |
|---|--|---|----------------------------------|
| Teacher 1   | Teacher 2  | Teacher 3   | Teacher 4                        |
| NO, when you work with small groups you have more chance to evaluate  | No, in a large group there is not enough time to let all student to talk and provide feedback. | No, it is impossible because teachers have many activities to do during the class when it comes to a large group. | Yes, I can do it in both groups. |
| Conclusion.   |  |   |                                  |
| Three of the four teachers interviewed answered that they are not able to provide feedback to each student relating their speaking skills the same way in a large class than small class. |  |   |                                  |

| <b>3) Do you consider students can provide better results in small classes than large classes? Yes. No Why?</b>  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| Teacher 1  | Teacher 2   | Teacher 3  | Teacher 4   |
| Definitely, yes. When we have small groups they are forced to participate.   | Yes, because the teacher can have a better control of the class and improve it with activities. | Yes, because teacher will have chance to listen to each student when it comes to their doubts. | Yes, the learning process is centered and students don't get distracted easily. |
| <b>Conclusion.</b>   |   |  |   |
| In this question all the teacher consider that students can provide better performance and results in a small class than a large class, they mention students participate more, they can listen to each other too. |   |  |   |

| <b>4) According to you, what is the impact students can perceive from the class size issue? Explain?</b>  |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| Teacher 1   | Teacher 2  | Teacher 3   | Teacher 4   |
| There is a positive impact on the challenge students even in large group and as a negative impact some students hide themselves to participate.   | class size really influences on the speaking learning of students because believe it or not large groups affects their participation | As negative impact students do not have enough time to participate. As positive impact we can think of many student talking and sharing their opinion | Students don't pay attention to it! Most of them don't really care. |
| <b>Conclusion.</b>  |  |   |   |
| All the teacher shared some perspectives explaining that there is always a positive impact and a negative impact, they see as challenge for those who participate even if the group is large they do an effort and consider as negative impact that some student do not even care sometimes or do not pay attention to the class. |  |   |   |

| <b>5) Can students present different attitudes due to the class size influence? Why?</b>   |  |   |                 |
|--|--|---|-----------------|
| Teacher 1  | Teacher 2  | Teacher 3   | Teacher 4       |
| YES, because each student is different and some like participating while some other prefer to hide.  | YES, some students can be afraid or scared of participating in large class whereas in small classes that problem can be eradicated | YES, because the student can be focused on the class when they are confident and committed. | NO. Not really. |
| Conclusion.  |  |   |                 |
| Three of four teachers consider that students presented different attitudes, since some of them like participating some other hide themselves, they are showing different behaviors. |  |   |                 |

| <b>6) Is the methodology you use as a teacher in the classroom affected by class size related to their speaking skills? Why?</b>   |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| Teacher 1  | Teacher 2   | Teacher 3  | Teacher 4   |
| NO, it is not affected because each group receive the same information in the same way.  | Yes, because it is the same material the one that will be taught to the same audience | Yes, because activities are not completed or checked by the teachers to make sure all student participate. | No, it's not affecting due to the many speaking activities I develop. |
| Conclusion.  |   |  |   |
| Two teachers answered that their methodology is not affected by class size whereas the other two teachers consider it is affected. |   |  |   |

| <b>7) Do you use the same methodology to teach small and large groups?</b>   |   |   |              |
|--|---|---|--------------|
| Teacher 1  | Teacher 2   | Teacher 3   | Teacher 4    |
| Definitely NO. Since we are aware that we will have a large group, we prepare activities where students have to participate.   | No, in large groups I need to divide the class in groups of 4 or 5 and the activities cannot be performed the same by students. | No, because it is not possible to apply the same activities to a 50 students class than a 20 students class,. | No, I don't. |
| <b>Conclusion.</b>   |   |   |              |
| All the teachers use different methodologies to teach either a large group or a small group, one of them said since they are aware he/she will work with a large group more he/she needs to be prepaid since it takes more dedication on lesson plans. |   |   |              |

| <b>8) Do you agree that students fail the Reading and Conversation I courses due to class size?</b>   |   |  |                      |
|---|---|--|----------------------|
| Teacher 1   | Teacher 2   | Teacher 3  | Teacher 4            |
| NO, because the ones that fail are those who do not want to participate or make activities.   | It depends because due to many students in a large group it is difficult to evaluate participation. | No, because each student is in charge of their own improvement in their speaking skills. Teachers are just facilitators to learn and practice. | No, I don't think so |
| <b>Conclusion.</b>  |   |  |                      |
| Three of the four teachers said no, they do not consider they fail due to the class size issue because they just have to participate and accomplish their assignments which is easy for them but one of the teacher said it depends because many students are difficult to evaluate their participation and provide a real grade. |   |  |                      |

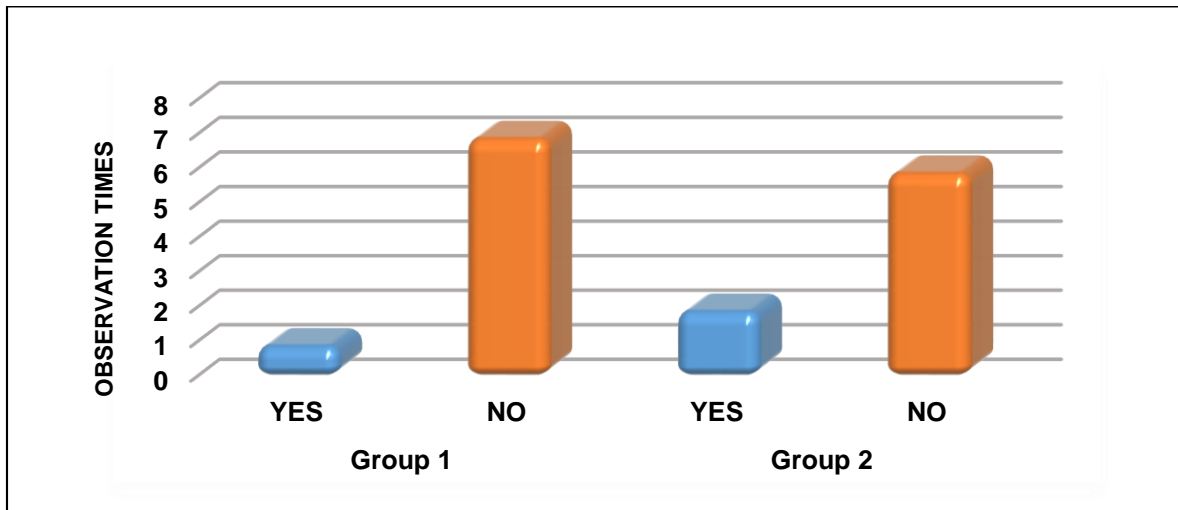
| <b>9) According to you, what is the most appropriate number of students in a Reading and Conversation I class?</b>  |           |           |           |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Teacher 1   | Teacher 2 | Teacher 3 | Teacher 4 |
| 25  | 18        | 18        | 25        |
| Conclusion.   |           |           |           |
| All the teachers consider the appropriate number of the students in a class should be between twenty or twenty-five the most, two of them selected 18 students referring to a twenty students class but the option was not available in the question. |           |           |           |

| <b>10) In your opinion, what would be the best recommendations to reduce class size influence in students' speaking skills?</b>   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher 1   | Teacher 2                                     | Teacher 3   | Teacher 4   |
| As recommendations, more teachers should be hired and build more classrooms.  | To hire more teachers and create more groups. | The Foreign Language Department should look for a budget to build more classrooms | To open more groups and give more class hours! e.g. from 4 to 6 hours per week. |
| Conclusion.   |   |   |   |
| According to the four teachers think that the best recommendations to reduce class size influence in the students 'speaking skills were basically to hire more teacher, create more groups and build more classrooms with government aide for the budget. |   |   |   |

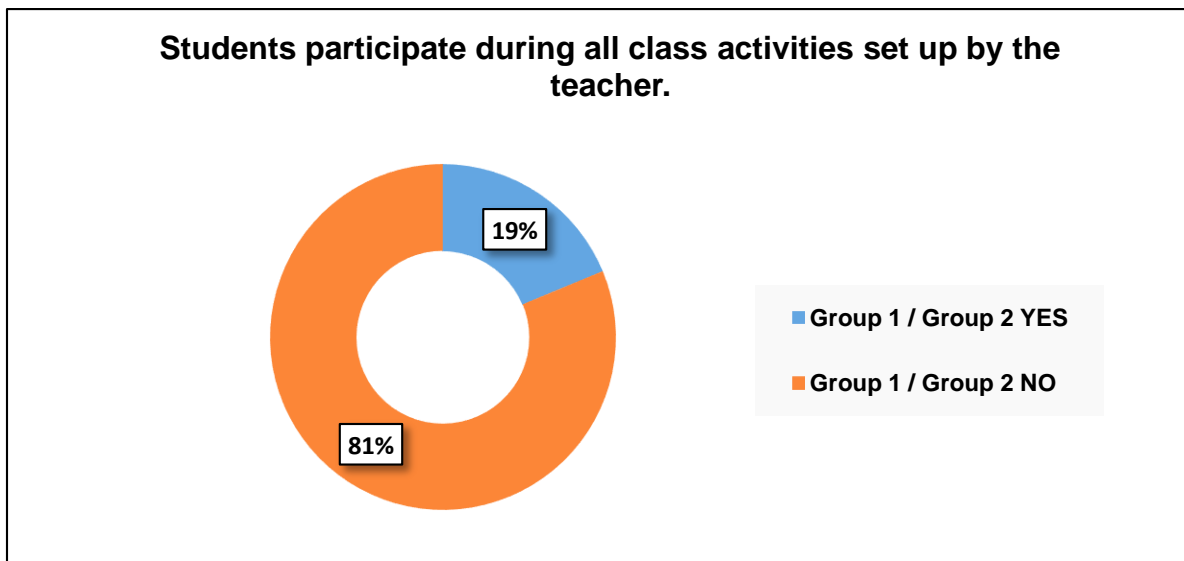
## Checklist Observation Analysis

### Large Class Observation

To administer this instrument, researchers had to observe the Reading and Conversation I in English courses, specifically the large groups. The observation was developed two times a week for a month observing each group 8 times in total.

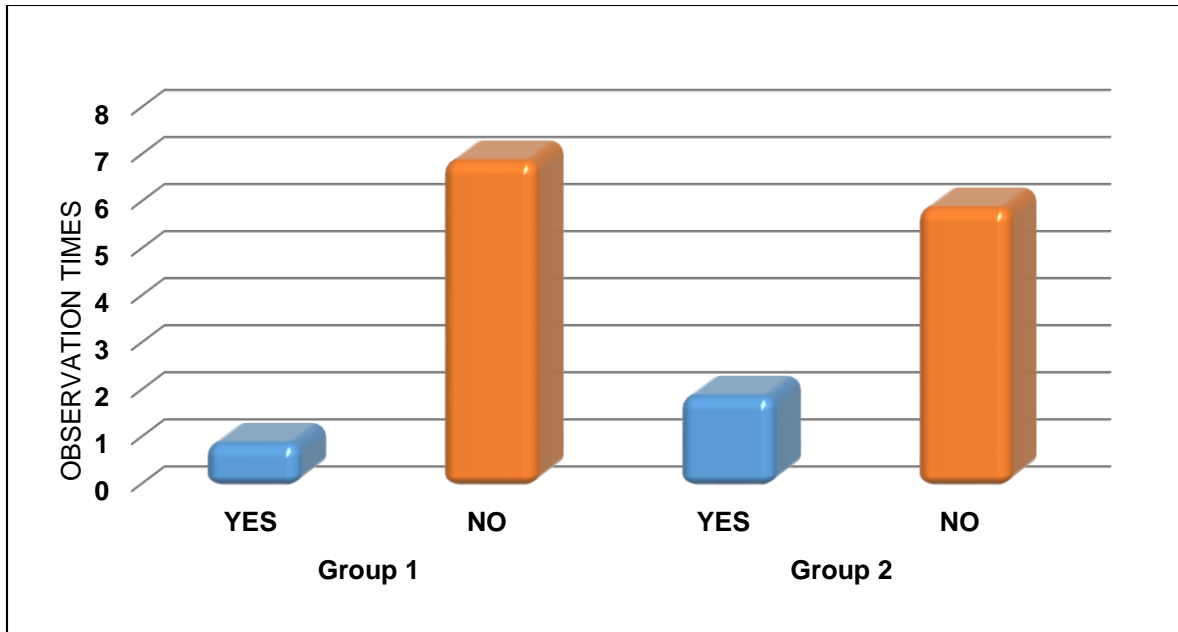


Students and teacher were observed 8 times in a month 2 times per week each group.

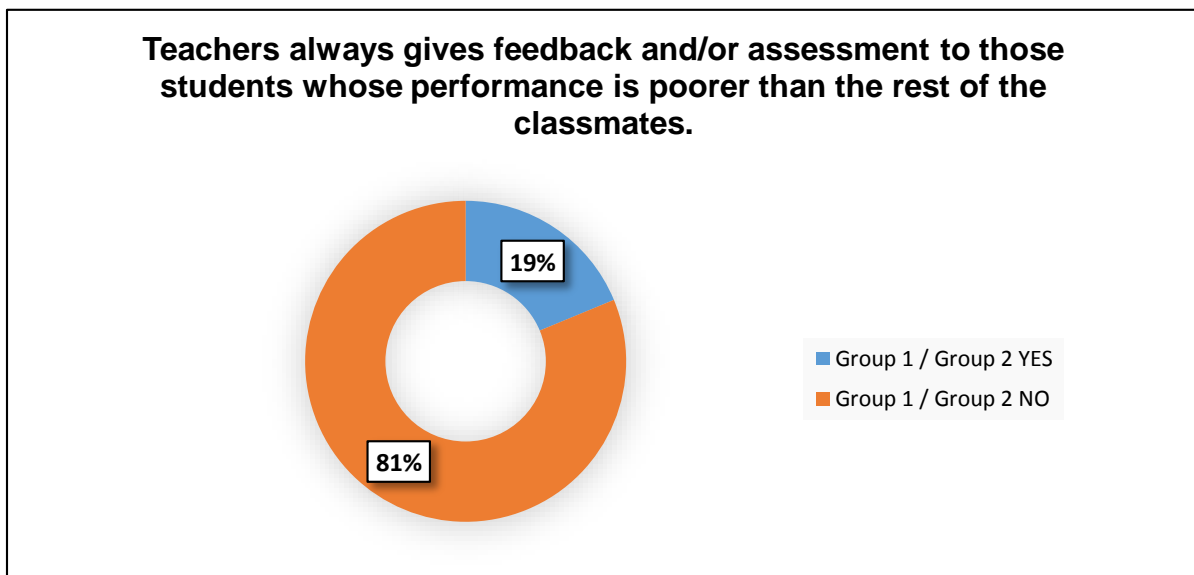


Researchers concluded on the first question that 81% of the students do not participate during all class activities set up by the teacher whereas 19% participate in a large class.

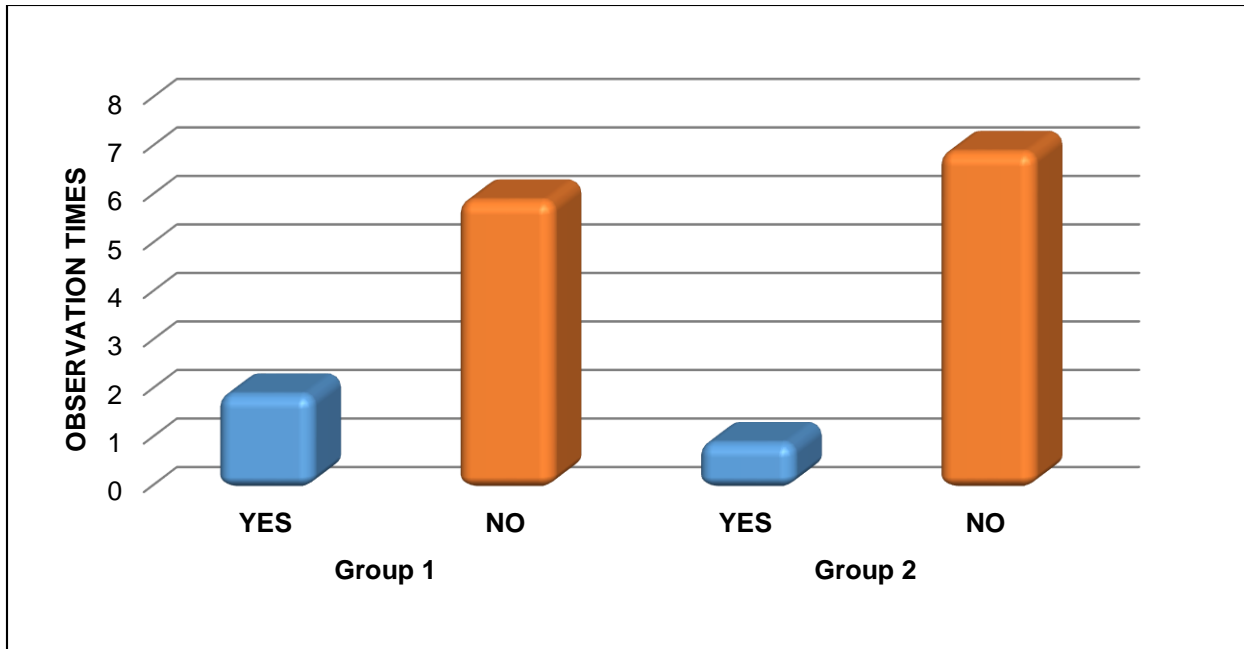




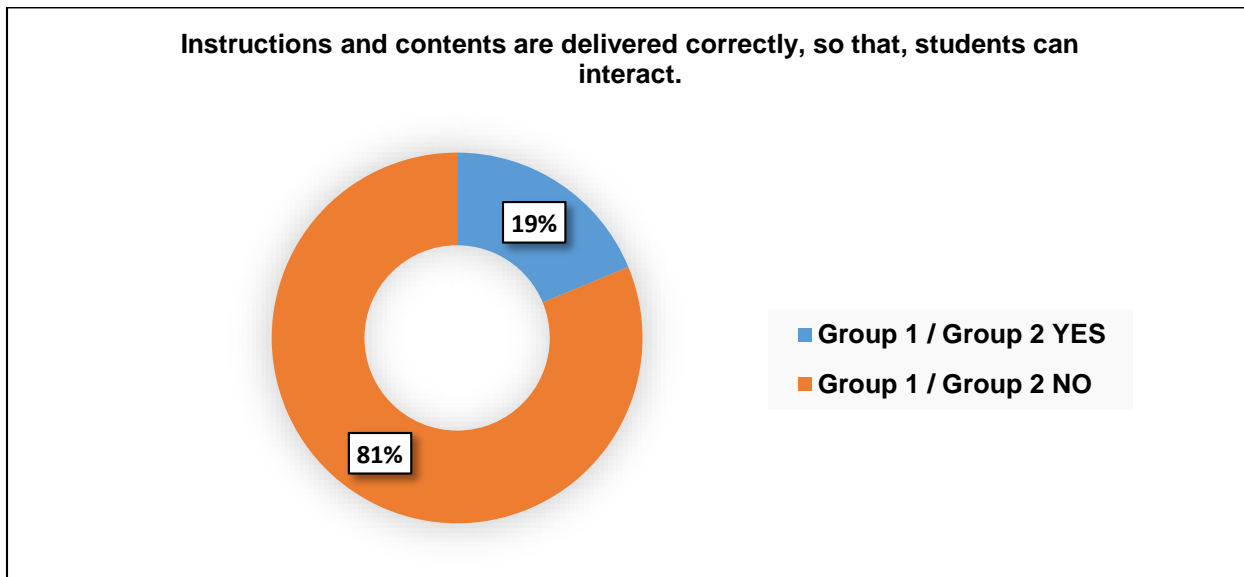
Students and teacher were observed 8 times in a month 2 times per week each group.



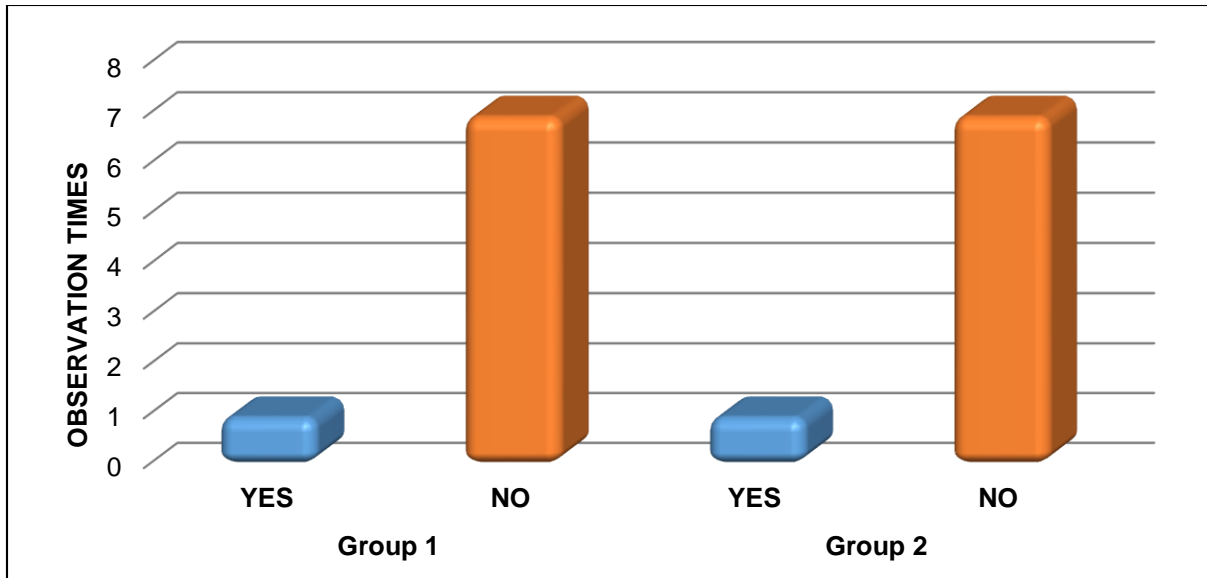
Researchers concluded that 81% of the times teachers do not provide feedback to those students who need more attention. But 19% of the times teachers gave feedback to those students.



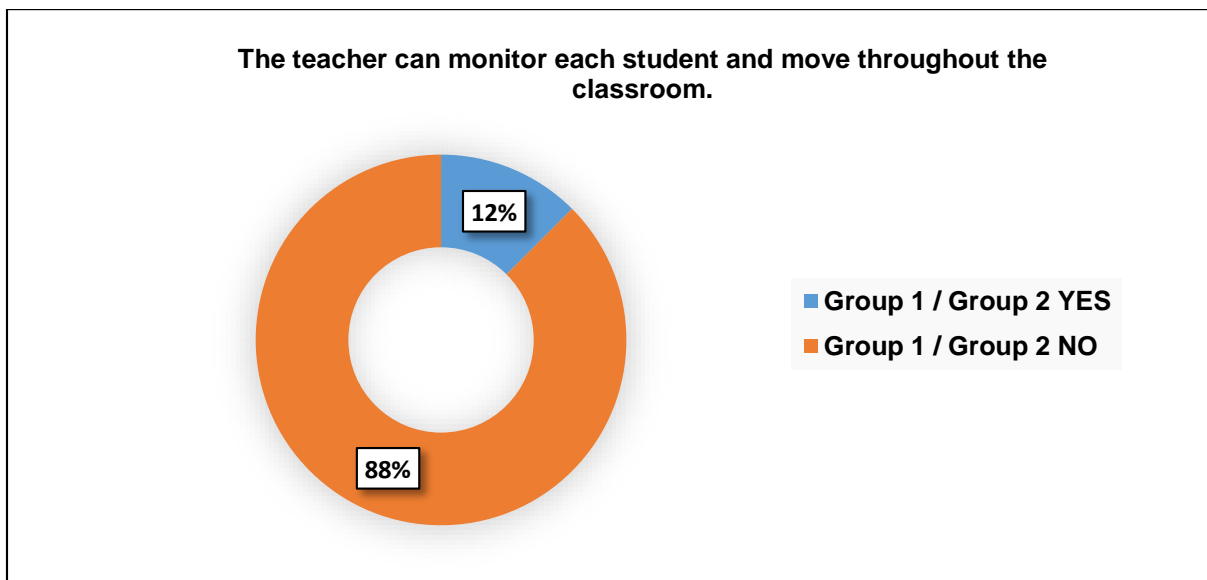
Students and teacher were observed 8 times in a month 2 times per week each group.



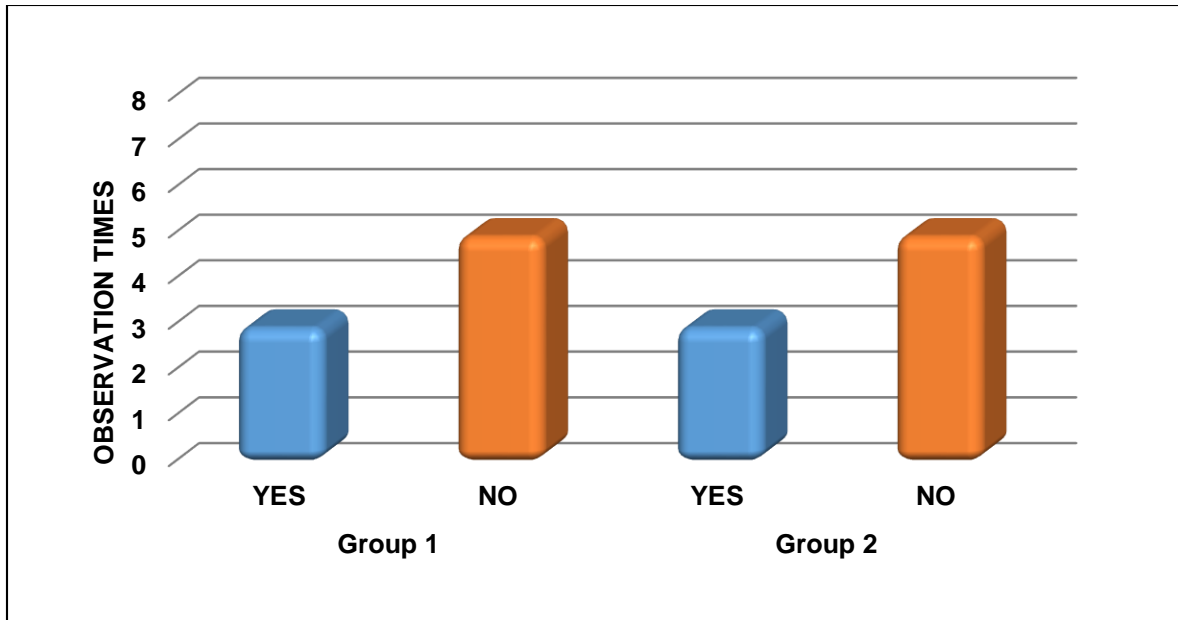
Researchers concluded that 81% of the times instructions and contents are delivered correctly, whereas a 19% of the times the instructions presented trouble to be delivered due to the number of students.



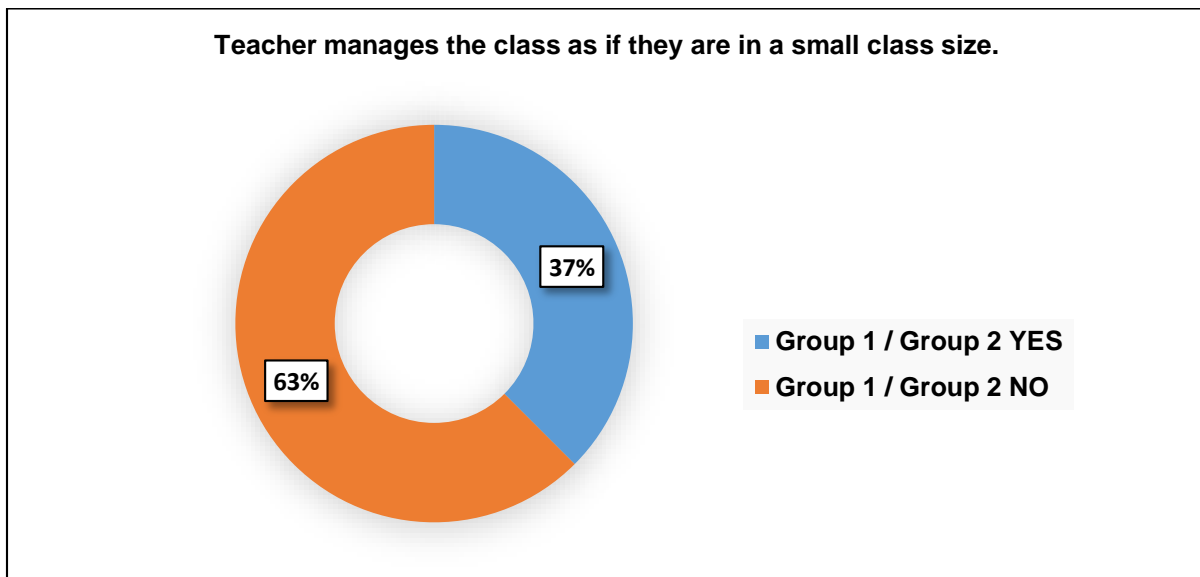
Students and teacher were observed 8 times in a month 2 times per week each group.



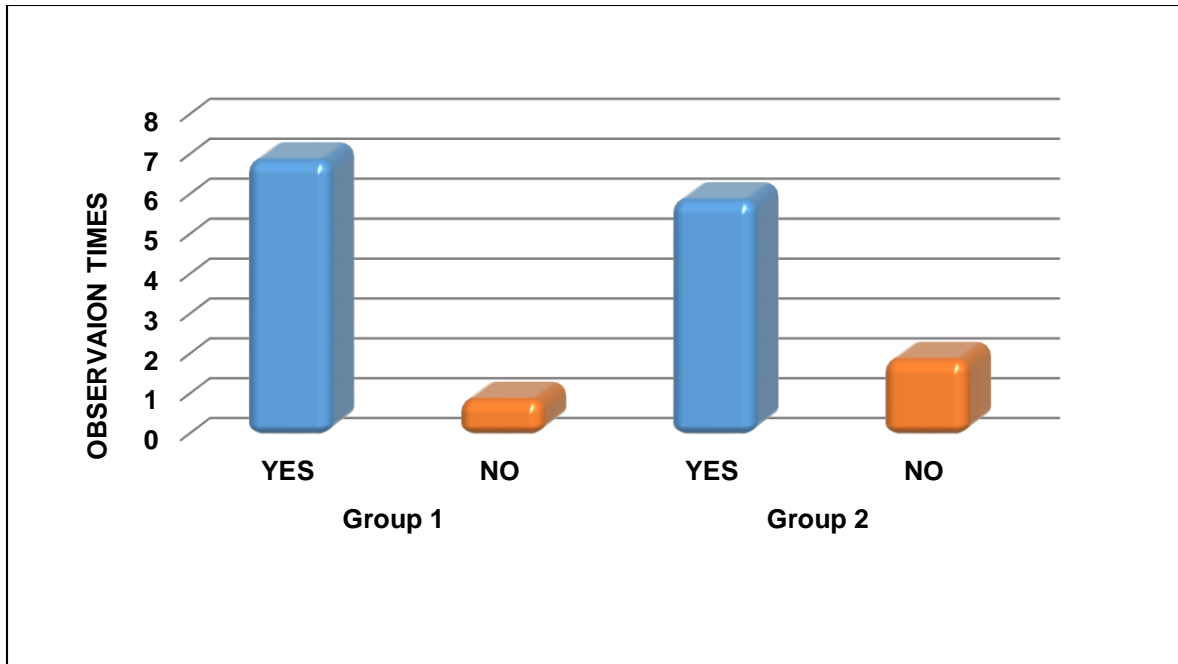
According to what it could have been observed 88% of times teachers are not able to monitor each student and move between them. In the other hand, 12% of the times it was possible to see that teacher is able to monitor all the students but just for a few minutes.



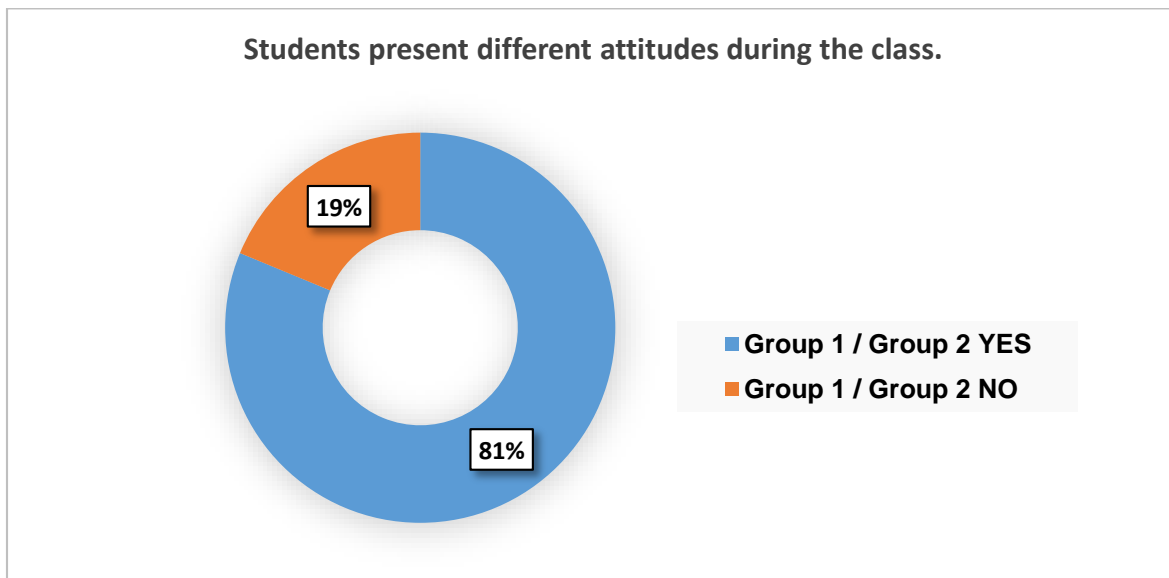
Students and teacher were observed 8 times in a month 2 times per week each group.



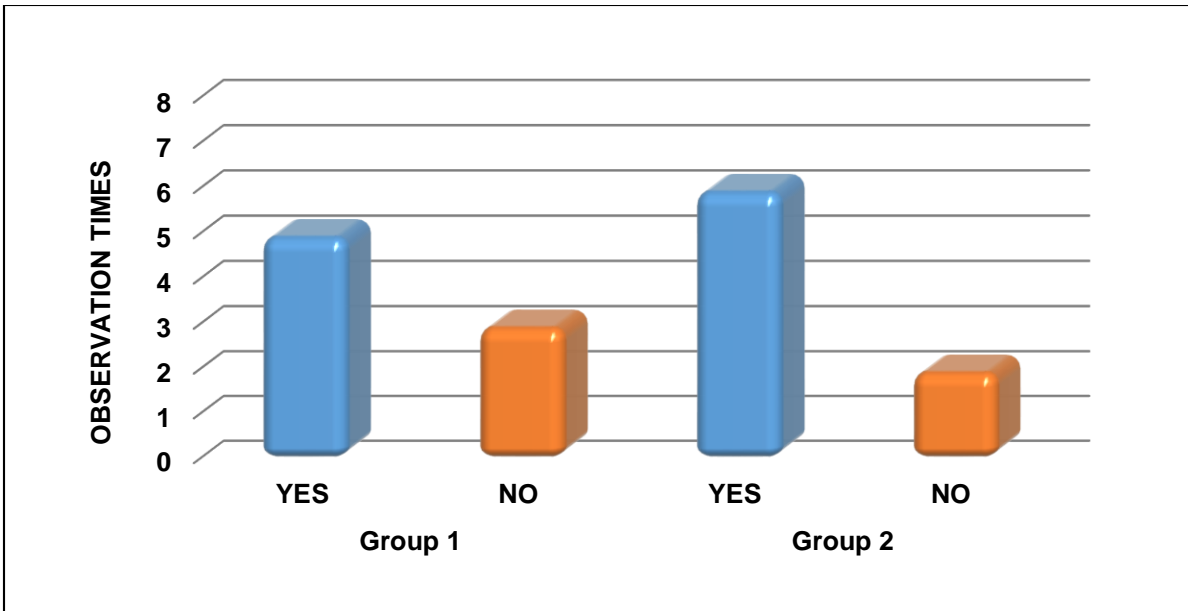
According to the observation, 63% of the teachers manage the class as if they are in a small class size, whereas, 37% of them makes some little differences in the management of the class.



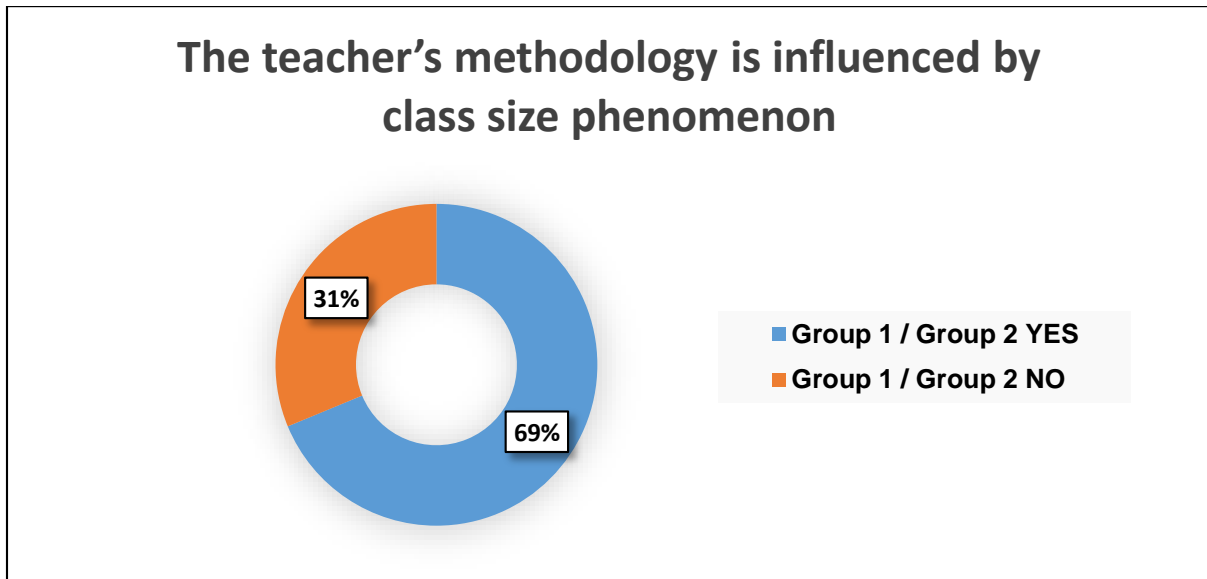
Students and teacher were observed 8 times in a month 2 times per week each group.



It was discovered through the observation that 81% of the times students present different attitudes during the class, in the other hand, this exposed that 19% of the times students present the same attitudes.



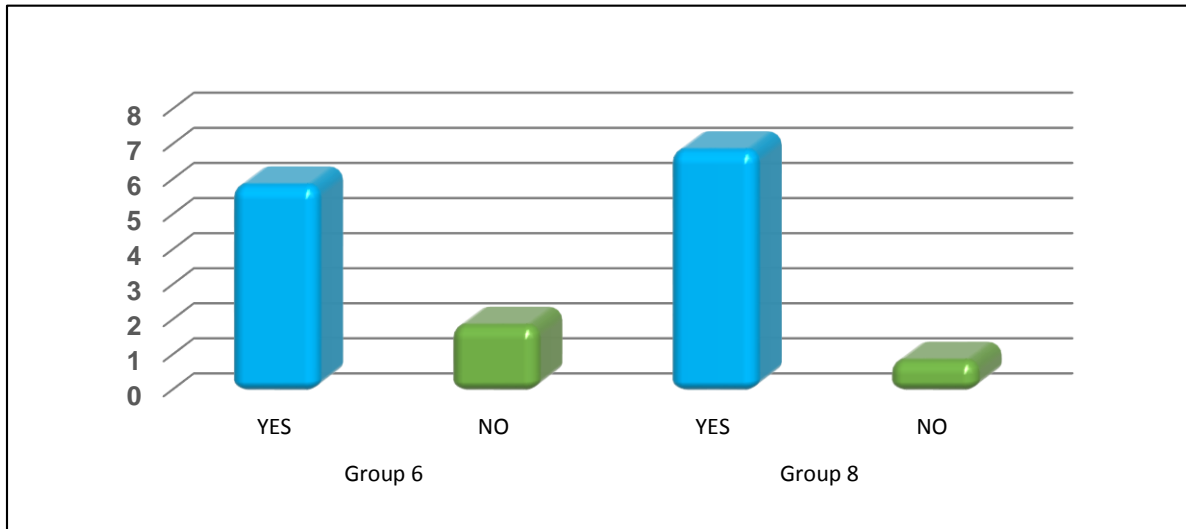
Students and teacher were observed 8 times in a month 2 times per week each group.



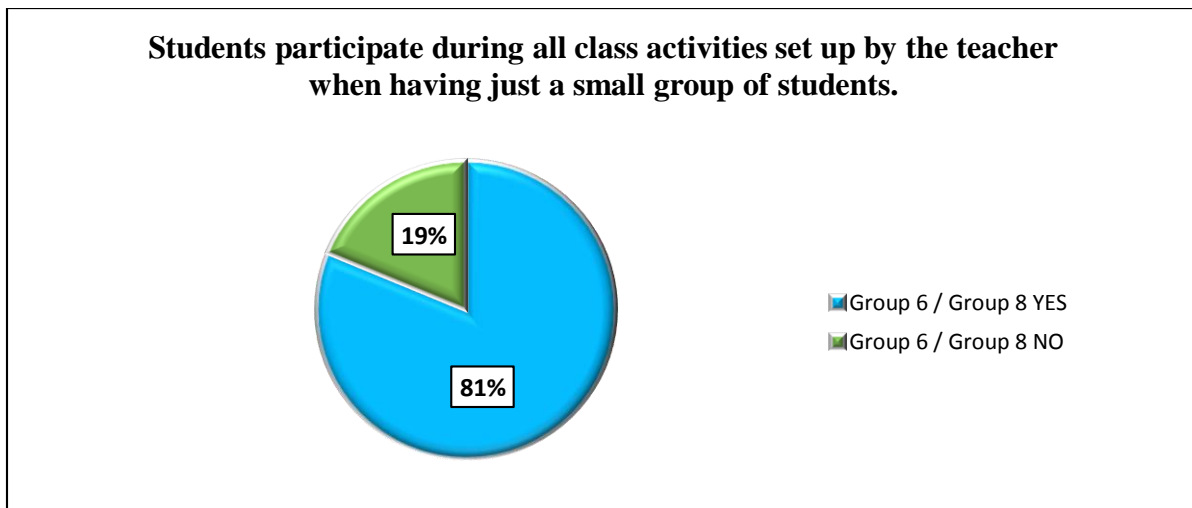
According to the observation, teachers' methodology is influenced 69% by class size phenomenon, whereas, 31% is reflecting that sometimes such as influence is not affecting the teachers' methodology.

## Small Class Observation

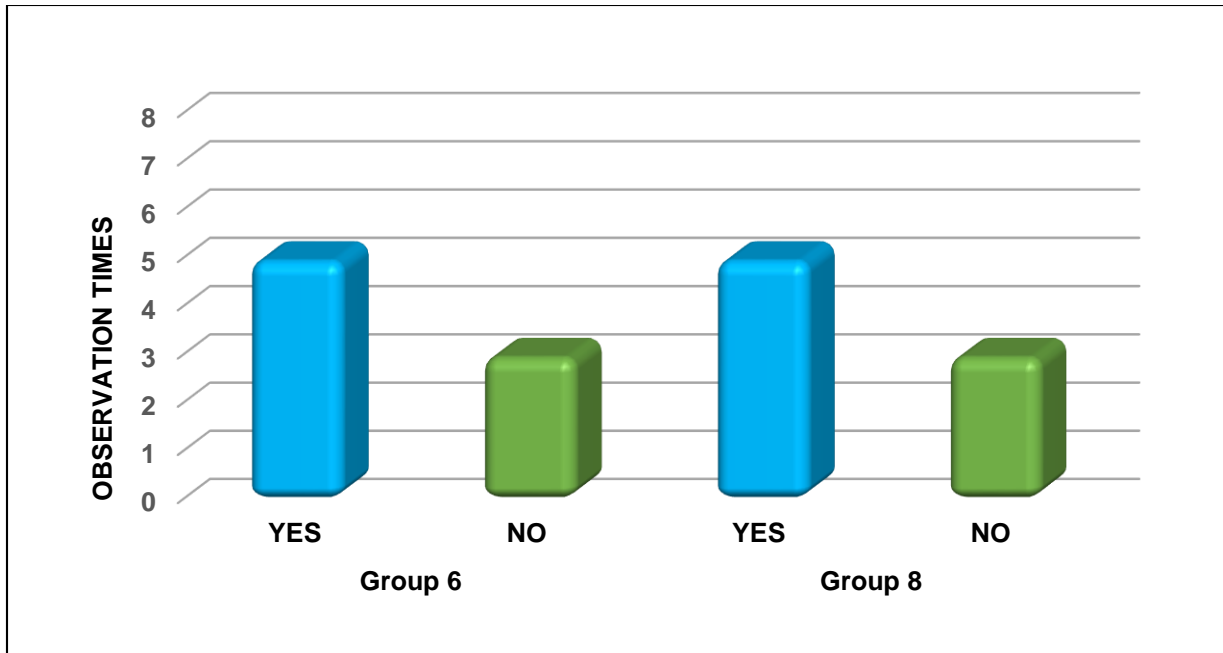
To administer this instrument, researchers had to observe the Reading and Conversation I in English courses, specifically the small groups. The observation was developed two times a week for a month observing each group 8 times in total.



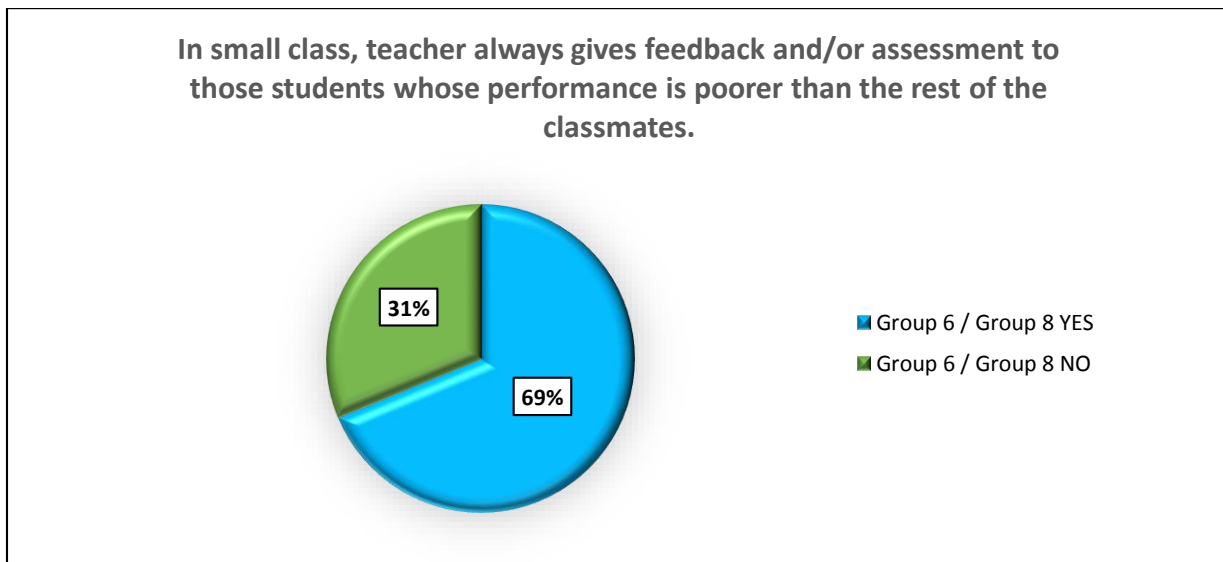
Students and teacher were observed 8 times in a month 2 times per week each group.



According to the observation 81% of the students participate during all class activities set up by the teachers, whereas, 19% of them do not participate that often they are shy to do it , some others they simply did not want to participate. Same people participate.

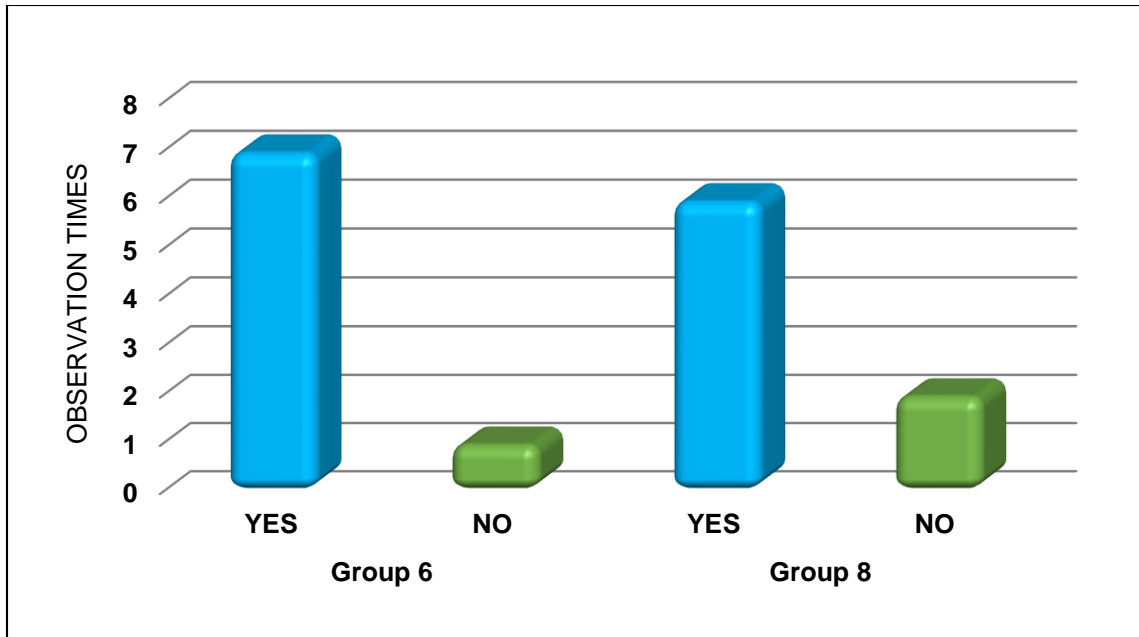


Students and teacher were observed 8 times in a month 2 times per week each group.

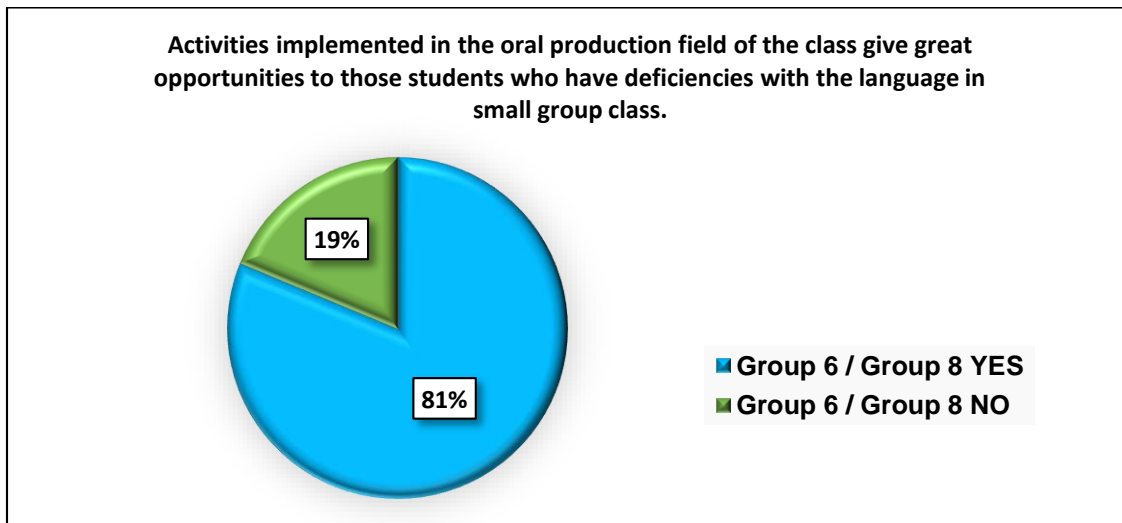


It was discovered that 69% of the times the teacher can gives feedback to those students with troubles. Whereas 31% of times the teacher did not provide feedback to all those students with difficulties.

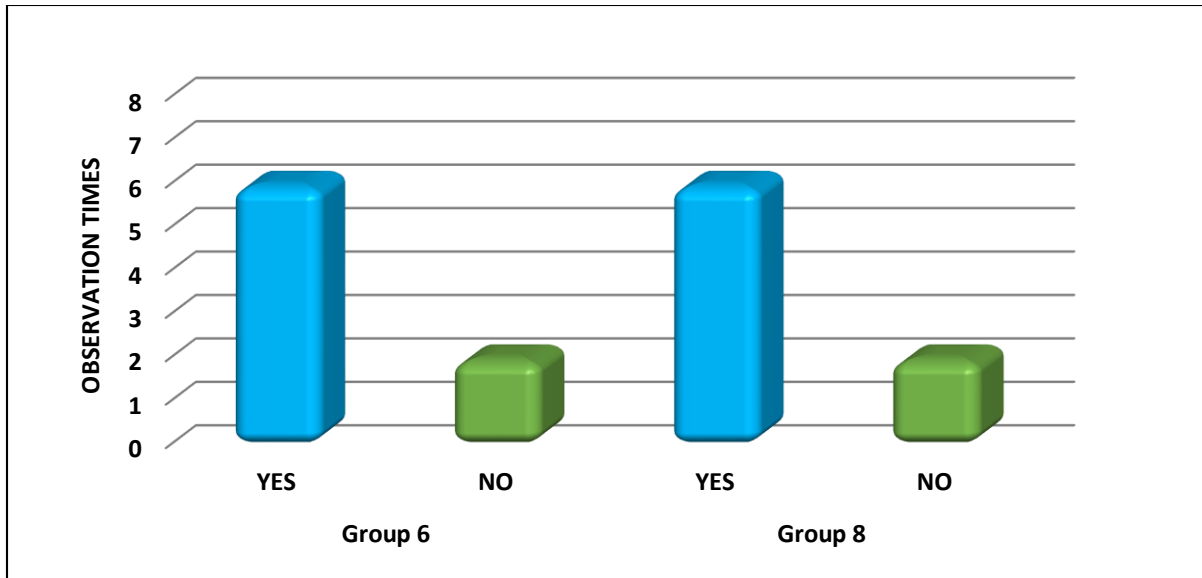




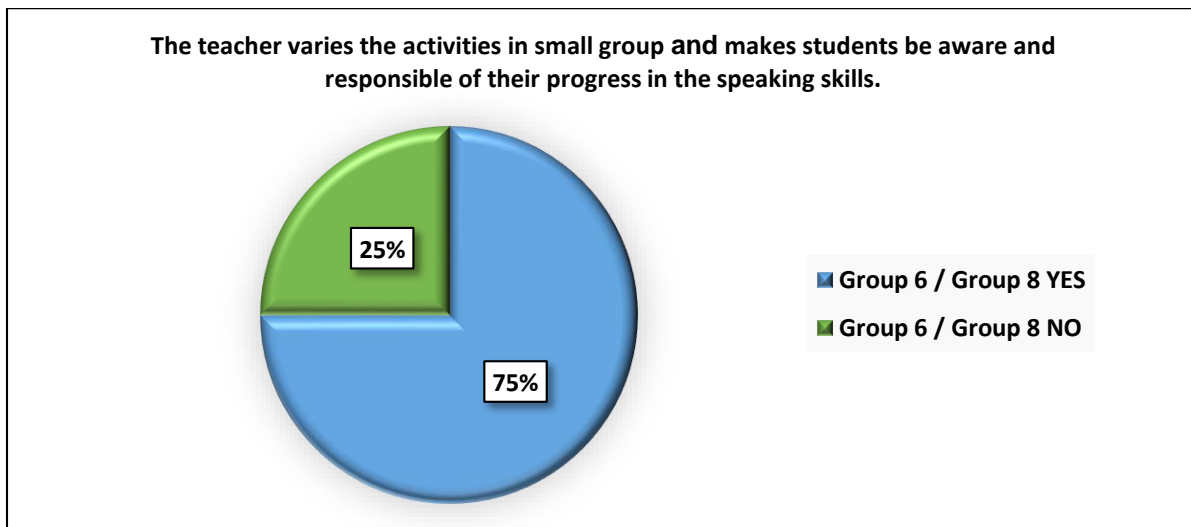
Students and teacher were observed 8 times in a month 2 times per week each group.



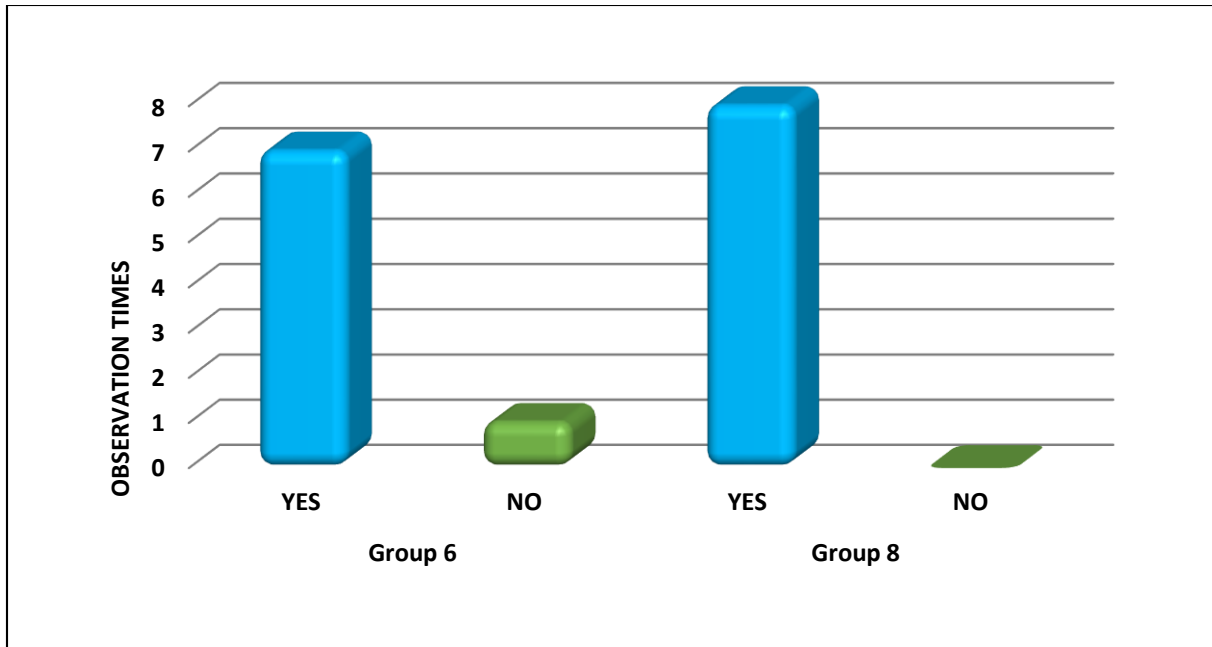
According to the observation, 81% of times the activities were implemented in the oral production field to provide opportunities to participate to those students who have deficiencies. In the other hand, 19% of the times was not possible to implement such as activities.



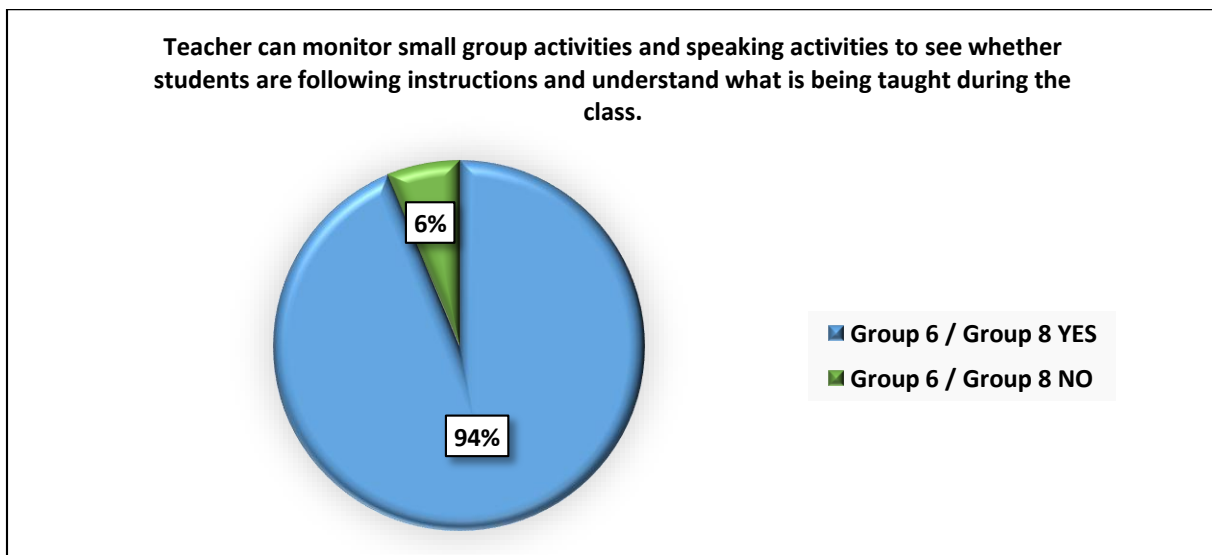
Students and teacher were observed 8 times in a month 2 times per week each group.



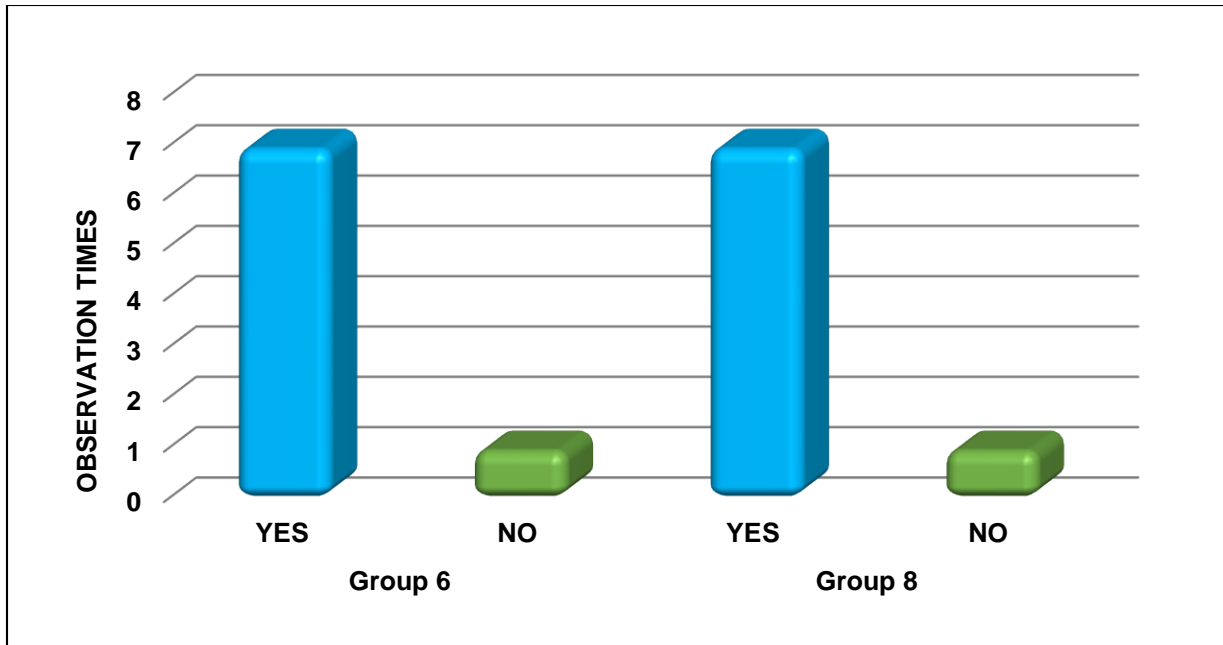
As a result, 75% of the times the teacher varies the activities making student to be aware of their progress in the speaking skills, whereas the 25% of the times it was not noticeable the variation of activities.



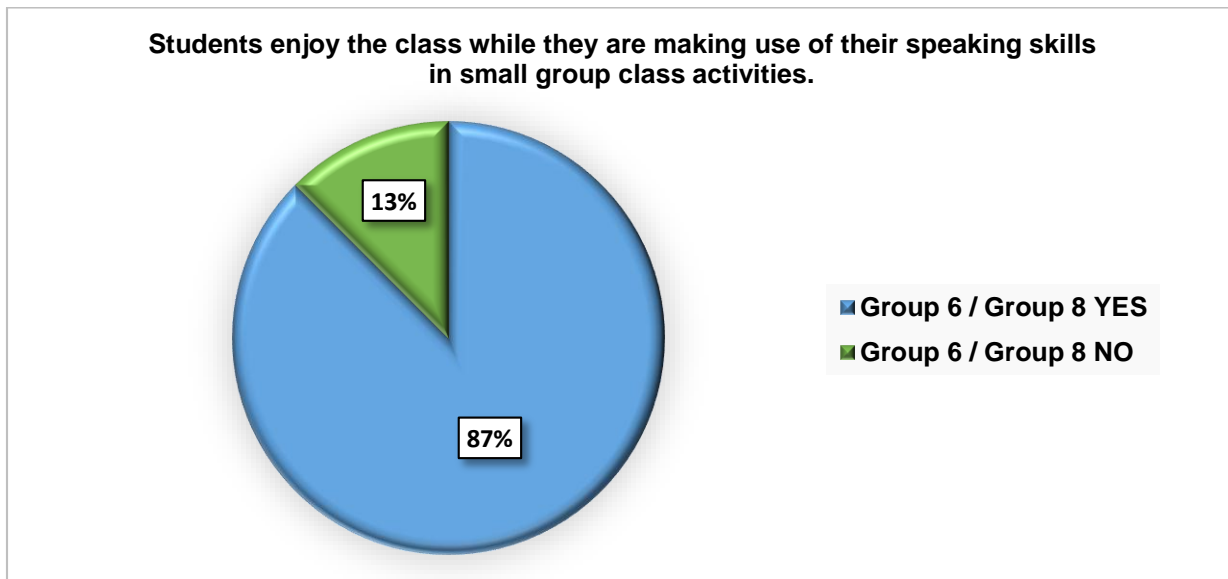
Students and teacher were observed 8 times in a month 2 times per week each group.



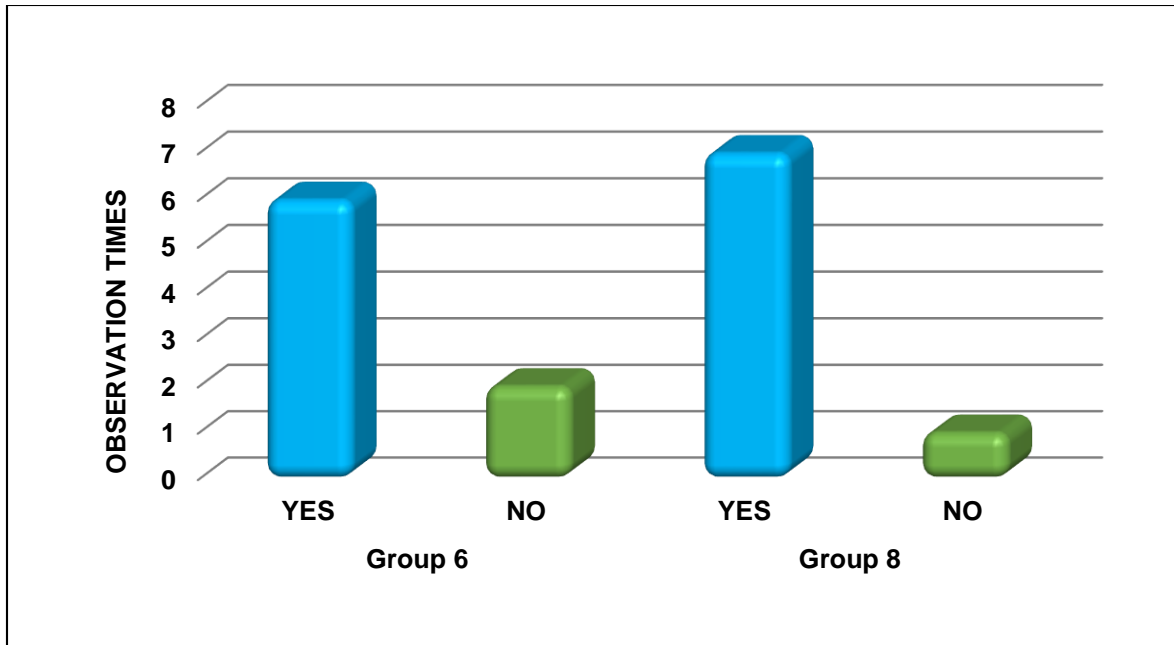
It is observed that 94% of the times the teachers can monitor small group activities and speaking skills. Besides, 6% of the times this monitoring was not possible to be accomplished.



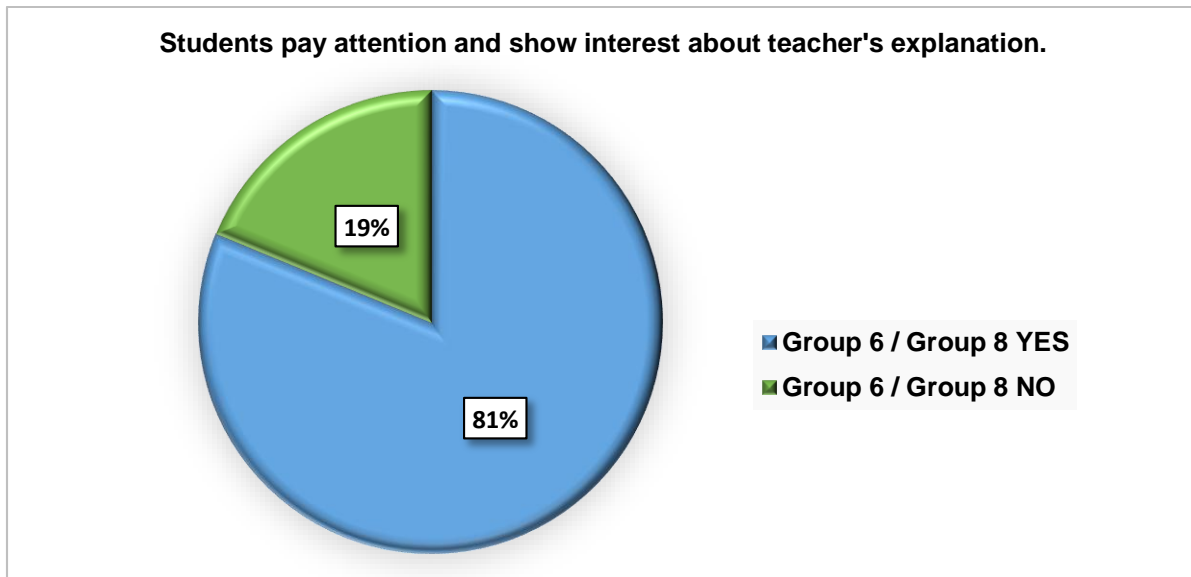
Students and teacher were observed 8 times in a month 2 times per week each group.



It is notorious that 87% of the times students were observed they enjoyed the class while they made use of their speaking skills. Whereas, 13% of the times they did not show the same enthusiasm because some of them did not participate.



Students and teacher were observed 8 times in a month 2 times per week each group.



It is observed that 81% of the times student pay attention and show interest to the teacher's explanation while 19% of the times students do not pay attention to the teacher.

# **FINDINGS**

## **Research questions**

In response to this problem, the study proposes to investigate the effects of class size on students' speaking proficiency with the following:

### **What are the effects of class size in the students' oral proficiency in the reading and conversation I?**

Students are not able to improve their speaking abilities due to class size issue such as distraction, no participation, and not receiving personalized feedback from teacher.

### **How different the teachers' learning techniques are implemented in small and large groups?**

Teachers implement different methodologies for students; based on the students' needs taking into account the class size.

### **What are the differences in the students' behavior about large classes and small classes?**

The students' behavior does not only depend on the class size but also on their commitment to improve their speaking skill. However, they may behave differently in a large than a small class.

### **What is the percentage of failed students due to the class size issue related to their speaking acquisition?**

The percentage of the students who failed in the last two years is **10.5%** including the students who unrolled the subject meaning that class size issue is not relevant, whereas between **89%** and **90%** succeed even in large classes. It depends on the students' commitment as well.

### **What is the effectiveness to have smaller classes in the groups of Reading and conversation I in English?**

Students' learning is developed efficiently and accurately in smaller classes, but also depends on the students' attitudes and abilities.

## CONCLUSIONS.

As a conclusion, both teachers and students agree with the approach of Finn and Pannozzo and Achilles (2003) which states that “Small class size have positive effects”. They said that small class size help not only students to have more chance to practice and interact among them improving their speaking skill but also teachers in order to have more control of students and a better development of topics in class. In contrast with large class size that have more distractors for both students and teachers that impede or hinder the learning process.

- Definitely class size is really important in Reading and Conversation I in English courses because it is in this subject where students make use of what they have learned from previous courses.
- Researchers confirmed with different types of instruments that student can participate more and enjoy the classes in small groups even the teacher can have more control of the class and provide essential feedback for those who need it.
- It is notorious that more classrooms need to be built at the Foreign Language Department, because it will contribute to the development of the students relating their speaking skill.
- Students present different attitudes depending if they feel comfortable participating in class or simply they behave differently in a small than a large class. Consequently, a positive or negative impact can be reflected.
- Most of the students in small groups participate but there are always some of them that are shy or feel uncomfortable to do it.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS.**

In agreement with the obtained data from the instruments used during the research project related to the topic “How class size influence the speaking skill of the students in Reading and Conversation I in English course at the Foreign Languages Department of Universidad de El Salvador” researchers elaborated some recommendations to take into account to enhance the speaking skills of the student and contribute to other researchers in case this topic will be related to their research projects.

- Encourage students to participate even if they are in large or small classes. They should take profit to practice their speaking skills and to be reinforced by the teacher.
- Teachers should apply a specific and adapted methodology for large and small classes since they can have different activities in each type of group.
- The Foreign Language Department should facilitate the classrooms available to assign all the students enrolled in the Reading and Conversation I in English course.
- More teachers should be hired if necessary since some of them have expressed it is difficult to monitor the whole class or provide personalized feedback to each student.
- Teachers are to help students be aware that they are responsible to improve in the oral production field using the speaking skills to participate during the class either small or large class.
- Personalized trainings should be implemented to the teachers to learn how to teach in large classes to avoid any inconveniences during the class so that they are able to adapt their methodology.



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# **ANNEXES**

## SURVEY

**Objective:** To gather information through the students' opinions in order to know about their perspective toward the topic.

**Instructions:** Circle the answer that best fit according to your opinion.

- 1) Does class size influence in the classroom to develop your speaking skills?  
a) Strongly Agree.    b) Agree.    c) Neutral.    d) Disagree.    e) Strongly Disagree.
- 2) Can teachers have more time to individualize their feedback in small classes?  
a) Strongly Agree.    b) Agree.    c) Neutral.    d) Disagree.    e) Strongly Disagree.
- 3) Can teachers spend more time teaching the material and less time getting the attention of those who get distracted in small classes?  
a) Strongly Agree.    b) Agree.    c) Neutral.    d) Disagree.    e) Strongly Disagree.
- 4) Is there more time for the students to share their own ideas, express their opinions and practice their speaking skills in small classes?  
a) Strongly Agree.    b) Agree.    c) Neutral.    d) Disagree.    e) Strongly Disagree.
- 5) Do students have higher grades and perform better in their speaking skills in smaller classes?  
a) Strongly Agree.    b) Agree.    c) Neutral.    d) Disagree.    e) Strongly Disagree
- 6) Do students fail Reading and Conversation courses due to lack of commitment to participate in large classes?  
a) Strongly Agree.    b) Agree.    c) Neutral.    d) Disagree.    e) Strongly Disagree.
- 7) Do Large classrooms make discussion and group work more difficult especially in reading and Conversation I in English?  
a) Strongly Agree.    b) Agree.    c) Neutral.    d) Disagree.    e) Strongly Disagree.
- 8) Is it easier for a student to get lost due to the lack of engagement in large classes?  
a) Strongly Agree.    b) Agree.    c) Neutral.    d) Disagree.    e) Strongly Disagree.
- 9) According to you, what is the most appropriate number of students in a Reading and Conversation I class?  
a) 15                    b) 18                    c) 25                    d) 35                    e) 40
- 10) In your opinion, what would it be the best suggestions to reduce class size influence affecting your speaking skills?

## TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

Teacher's name:

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**Objective:** To gather information through teachers' perspective in order to know what they think about the topic.

**Instructions:** Answer the following questions according to your own experience lived in the classroom.

- 1) Do you think that class size is important in Reading and Conversation I courses in the speaking skill field?
- 2) Do you consider you can provide feedback to each student relating their speaking skills in small and large groups in the same way?
- 3) Do you consider students can provide better results in small classes than large classes?  
Yes. No Why?
- 4) According to you, what is the impact students can perceive from the class size issue?  
Explain?
- 5) Can students present different attitudes due to the class size influence? Why?
- 6) Is the methodology you use as a teacher in the classroom affected by class size related to their speaking skills? Why?
- 7) Do you use the same methodology to teach small and large groups?
- 8) Do you agree that students fail the Reading and Conversation I courses due to class size?
- 9) According to you, what is the most appropriate number of students in a Reading and Conversation I class?  
a) 15            b) 18            c) 25            d) 35            e) 40
- 10) In your opinion, what would be the best recommendations to reduce class size influence in students' speaking skills?

## CHECKLIST

### *Large class*

**Courses' name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Group:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Objective:** To observe how a large class size group develop the participation and speaking skill.

| ITEMS   | YES   | NO    |
|---|-------|-------|
| Students participate during all class activities set up by the teacher.   | _____ | _____ |
| Teachers always gives feedback and/or assessment to those students whose performance is poorer than the rest of the classmates. | _____ | _____ |
| Instructions and contents are delivered correctly, so that, students can interact.  | _____ | _____ |
| The teacher can monitor each student and move throughout the classroom.   | _____ | _____ |
| Teacher manages the class as if they are in a small class size.   | _____ | _____ |
| Students enjoy the class while they are making use of their speaking skills.  | _____ | _____ |
| - Students present different attitudes during the class.  | _____ | _____ |
| The teacher's methodology is influenced by class size phenomenon.   | _____ | _____ |

## CHECKLIST

### *Small class*

**Courses' name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Group:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Objective:** To observe how a small class size group develop the participation and speaking skill.

| ITEMS   | YES   | NO    |
|---|-------|-------|
| Students participate during all class activities set up by the teacher when having just a small group of students.  | _____ | _____ |
| In small class, teacher always gives feedback and/or assessment to those students whose performance is poorer than the rest of the classmates.                              | _____ | _____ |
| Activities implemented in the oral production field of the class give great opportunities to those students who have deficiencies with the language in small group class.   | _____ | _____ |
| The teacher varies the activities in small group and makes students be aware and responsible of their progress in the speaking skills.                                      | _____ | _____ |
| Teacher can monitor small group activities and speaking activities to see whether students are following instructions and understand what is being taught during the class. | _____ | _____ |
| Students enjoy the class while they are making use of their speaking skills in small group class activities.  | _____ | _____ |
| Students pay attention and show interest about teacher's explanation.   | _____ | _____ |