

**American University of Armenia
Yerevan**

Students' Perceptions of Small Group Work
at the IEP Program
of the American University of Armenia

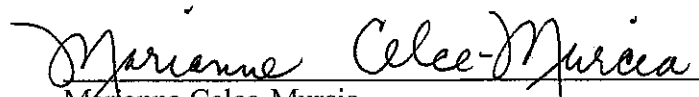
A thesis submitted in the satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

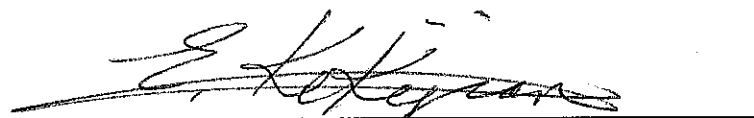
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Abstract

Small group instruction has been extensively implemented in the Intensive English Program of the American University of Armenia to prepare students for the university content courses where cooperative small group learning is widely used. This study investigated IEP students' perceptions of this instructional format to determine how it affects students' learning and what problems they see in regard to it in order for the faculty to respond to students' concerns.

The issues addressed were how students conceptualize the purpose of small group learning, their learning style preferences, the most successful small group tasks, and the usefulness of small group learning for the enhancement of students' social skills, higher order thinking, psychological wellbeing and learning English.

The results of the study showed that the students valued small group learning as an instructional format and considered their group experience to be positive. Some difficulties were perceived with regard to the social aspect of small group learning, and a few minor problems were mentioned in relation to its effect on language learning. To address these concerns, some recommendations were provided, aimed at the enhancement of this instructional format.

Organization of the thesis

This paper consists of 7 chapters:

Chapter 1, The Introduction, states the problems, provides background information about the university in which the research was conducted, explains the purpose and aims of the study and provides its rationale. In addition, it gives the possible limitations of the study.

Chapter 2, Literature Review, presents the previous research in student perceptions both in whole class and especially in small group contexts in various schools of US, Britain and Ireland, to demonstrate the validity of student mediation research for enhancing the quality of teaching.

Chapter 3, The Study, gives the description of the setting of the study, its participants, and methodology of the research. It also presents the study instrument.

Chapter 4, Data Analyses and Research Findings, reports on the qualitative and quantitative findings of the study.

Chapter 5, Discussion of the Findings, discusses the study results and shows the consistence of these results with previous research in the field.

Chapter 6, Recommendations, gives general recommendations for the enhancement of small group instruction both in IEP, AUA and other small group settings.

Chapter 7, Conclusions, summarizes the research, presenting the conclusions and recommendations for further research.

The Appendix contains a copy of the questionnaire used in this study.

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The implementation of the small group technique in the Intensive English Program at the American University of Armenia has both language teaching and academic goals. Its incorporation into the IEP curriculum is based on the assumption that group work enhances L2 communication in the classroom, prepares students to take the responsibility for their own learning, promotes their cognitive development, and gives students cooperative learning skills to function successfully in the university content courses. But how is the small group technique perceived by students, who before being exposed to this instructional format were educated in a traditional system with a lecture based memorization/repetition teaching mode in which the teacher was considered an unchallenged authority, and the students were not encouraged to express their ideas and opinions? What difficulties have students perceived in regard to their new experience of working in cooperative groups on problem-solving tasks requiring critical thinking and student-student interaction? And finally, how can their concerns be addressed?

The successful implementation of the small group work technique is rather complicated as by nature group work is a complex and dynamic process; group characteristics and processes affecting the productivity of group work are in constant evolution. Therefore the successful implementation of this technique requires that teachers be constantly aware of their students' attitudes and respond to their voices.

1.2. Background of the Study

The American University of Armenia (AUA) is a private non profit Armenian institution of higher education. It is affiliated with the University of California in the United States. The university offers instruction and research programs that provide learners with professional knowledge and skills to address the needs of Armenia and its surrounding regions for social

and economic growth. AUA currently provides graduate degrees in Business Administration, Industrial Engineering, Political Science, Public Health, Law, Computer Science and Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language.

Since English is the medium of instruction at AUA, the university offers a six month Intensive English Program to provide the university applicants with Western style academic culture and language skills necessary for accomplishing academic tasks in English. The IEP program includes an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) section which focuses on technical language preparing students to accomplish academic tasks in university content courses across the disciplines.

Since AUA is a graduate university based on a Western model, essential to the aim of its Intensive English Program is the facilitation of student transition from their native academic culture to a Western style academic environment. The program promotes students' active involvement in learning, critical thinking and creativity. In addition, small group work has been incorporated into the program to foster student autonomy, a range of personal and interpersonal skills and a sense of group membership necessary for studying successfully in degree programs.

1.3. Purpose and Aims

Research in cooperative learning has shown that this learning mode surpasses traditional forms of teaching in terms of generating learning gains, individual achievement, critical thinking, motivation to learn, positive interdependence between students and a relaxed learning environment. In addition, investigation of small group work in language settings has shown it to be an effective aid to communication in the classroom due to providing opportunities for students "to use language across a broader range of social and interpersonal functions than did lock-step teacher led classroom instruction" (Pica, 1994).

In conjunction with its aim of promoting a cooperative learning culture at AUA and developing students' communication skills in English, IEP has implemented the small group technique where students work together on specific cooperative tasks and language activities. Since AUA applicants are graduates of local institutions of higher education where a heavy emphasis is put on traditional instruction, a necessity emerged for the investigation of student perceptions of small group work in IEP instruction to explore how students view the new technique in terms of its effects on their cognitive development, motivation to learn, enhancement of positive interdependence, as well as development of language skills. The purpose was to provide IEP faculty with deeper insights about student thought processes in reference to small group work to respond to student concerns and allow them to achieve higher productivity in their use of the technique. In addition, student involvement in this learner- mediation- based research, where students were encouraged not only to share their reflections, but also state their suggestions of how to improve small group work, would suggest to students that their active involvement in the teaching/learning process is essential to AUA democratic traditions, and also that the enhancement of cooperative learning strategies is paramount to their academic success.

It was mentioned that in Armenian institutions of higher education the traditional teacher centered instruction has been extensively used. However, in response to community needs of having young professionals with a higher level of critical thinking to answer complex questions and work in teams, the Armenian Ministry of Education is taking steps towards the improvement of secondary and higher education. In this context the implementation of innovative methods and techniques and, among them cooperative learning, gains major significance. The implementation of these methods, however, may be received by educators and students both in Armenia and the surrounding regions with apprehension. The research that has been done in the field suggests that the instructional use of cooperative small groups

enhances learning, and that it is an effective aid to L2 learning, but it is influenced by “social, linguistic and pedagogical variables, many of which are yet unstudied” (Pica, 1994). The insufficient study of these variables, especially in educational environments in transition from traditional to alternative approaches, may be the reason for the apprehension teachers and students have towards the use of cooperative small group instruction. This study would seem to be useful in providing deep insights into the processes involved in cooperative small group learning, as well as student perceptions of these processes, and, as such, would help educators and students in becoming less reserved about it.

Though cooperative small group learning is a relatively well- researched area, little research in student perceptions of this technique has been done, especially on the graduate level. The thorough literature review I did found only a small number of research reports focusing on student perceptions of the technique, of which only one was conducted on a graduate level AP program. Therefore it seems this study would add valuable insights into the issue, thus contributing to the previous research in the field.

1.4. Rationale

Cooperative small group instruction in L2 classrooms is a complex and dynamic process involving motivational, cognitive and interactional factors all of which are assumed to influence second language acquisition. Since all these processes are psychological in nature, the observational data obtained from small group instruction may not reveal exactly what students think and feel. Without an awareness of student thought processes the possibility that improvements in teaching would happen and learner needs would be addressed is considerably minimized. As Wittrock (1989) stated, improvements in teaching can result if the effects of teaching on students’ thinking are known (Wittrock, 1984, as cited in Mulryan, p.280, 1994). To understand student thought processes and address their needs a constant exploration of student mediation is necessary. In this respect, it seems this self- report

research which allowed me to investigate student perceptions concerning small group instruction will contribute to the development of teaching culture in the classroom being responsive to learner needs and would encourage teachers in AUA and in other Armenian institutions of higher education to do further investigation of student mediation processes in whole classroom settings, and especially in small group contexts, since until now such research has not been conducted in Armenia.

1.5. Limitations

The possible limitations of this research may be the restricted number of the participants and the unique academic environment of AUA. These limitations will not allow the generalizing of the results of this study to other colleges and universities. However, this study does add insights into small group learning processes with student perceptions of these processes serving as a guide for those educators in Armenia who are interested in the implementation of the small group technique.

Chapter 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Research in Student Perceptions in Whole Class Settings

The study of student thought processes or perceptions is a relatively new area in research in teaching. As summarized by Mulryan, the research of student perceptions is based on the opinion that “teaching is mediated by student thought processes and that teachers influence student achievement, not directly, but by causing students to think and behave in certain ways” (Mulryan, 1994, p. 280). According to this view, “improvement in teaching and in understanding teaching can result if the effects of teaching on students’ thinking are known”. (Wittrock, 1896, as cited in Mulryan, p. 280, 1994).

Research on student perceptions has been conducted both in whole classroom environments and small group settings. In a whole classroom environment Leki and Carson (1994) studied former EAP (English for Academic Purposes) students’ attitudes about EAP writing instruction for the purpose of finding out how successful the writing course had been in providing students who were already in content courses with the writing skills necessary for the accomplishment of specific writing tasks in disciplinary courses across the university curriculum. The findings of the research showed that most of the students found the writing course helpful in addressing the writing requirements of the content courses, but also they expressed some concerns and desires. The students perceived the writing requirements in the content courses as being more difficult than in the EAP writing course. They reported a need to complete more intellectually challenging and demanding tasks that would better prepare them for the content course. The respondents also felt that during the course more emphasis had to be put on the development of their language and vocabulary. Finally, they expressed a desire for learning how to make better use of sources and materials, and how to write up the references to sources used for their research reports.

2.2. Research in Student Perceptions in Small Group Settings

A study of small group work and its assessment in a PBL (Problem Based Learning) curriculum was carried out at Manchester University, UK by the Faculty of Medicine (2002). The researchers (Willis, Jones, Bundy, Burdett, Whitehouse & O' Neill) investigated the students' perceptions of group work and its assessment in terms of what the students thought ought to be assessed, and how the assessment should be done. The study showed that the students considered group work a productive mode of learning. They reported a positive relationship between the degree of cooperation in groups and student motivation to learn: the most cooperative working groups were perceived as facilitating student motivation. The study made explicit the students' perceptions of the assessment of group work. The respondents agreed that the assessment should be summative. Two areas, according to them, had to be evaluated: behavioral skills in terms of how they interact, and cognitive skills in terms of how they work through a problem.

Garvin and Butcher (1995) studied student perceptions of small group projects in the biosciences- a new technique used at the program, for the purpose of revealing student attitudes toward it. The investigated areas were students' views of the project work, the process of working in groups and skills acquired in this process. The students perceived the project as being an effective teaching technique that facilitated student motivation to learn, their cognitive growth, as well as the development of a range of personal and interpersonal skills.

In a study by Mulryan (1994) student perceptions of small group processes were explored. Comparisons were made between students' and teachers' attitudes toward group work. The responses of high and low achievers, as well as males and females were also compared. The study showed an agreement in teachers' and students' perceptions of the advantages of group work and appropriate student behavior in small groups. Some

disagreement was observed between teacher and student perceptions concerning the social aspect of group work and characteristics of group tasks: the social aspect was stressed more by the learners, and the task variables were stressed more by the teachers. There were differences between the perceptions of high achievers and low achievers. High achievers exhibited a higher degree of understanding the nature of cooperative small group work than low achievers. The difference between the views of males and females was that females gave more weight to social patterns of group work, and males emphasized academic aims of group work over its social goals.

University students' perceptions of cooperative learning were examined by M. Phipps, C. Phipps, Kask and Higgins (2001). The purpose was to investigate whether cooperative learning was productive for students, and how it affected student motivation to learn as a way for the teachers and administrators to find out how students' motivation of working cooperatively in groups could be enhanced. The research revealed that though on the whole students perceived specific cooperative learning techniques as effective, their perceptions of cooperative learning in general were less favorable.

A study conducted by Morgan (2003) focused on university students' reflections on cooperative written examinations for group grades. The majority of the students reported support for the examination. The benefits of the cooperative examination for group grades, as perceived by students, were the creation of positive interdependence between group members which promoted deeper comprehension of the material, individual achievement, as well as the development of the feeling of belonging to a team. Only a few students expressed feelings of anxiety and concerns for the level of readiness of their group members for the examination.

It should be mentioned that research on student thought processes with respect to small group work on the graduate level has been very scarce. Such a study was conducted by Slimani-Rolls (2003) with students learning international business administration and the

French language. The findings of the research illustrate how the exploration of student thought processes can develop a "research culture" in university departments. Students' reflections about small group processes were investigated for the purpose of revealing factors affecting the behaviors of the groups. Two areas were studied: students' perceptions of working with their peers in small groups, and students' feelings about their teachers. The essential problems that emerged from the study were the differences between students' views and expectations about how interaction had to evolve in groups, and how learning had to be attained. The problems were discussed in class as a part of daily classroom activities. The discussions resulted in enhancing teacher and student understanding of the complexities of small group processes which allowed both parties take control over their behaviors.

Chapter 3. THE STUDY

3.1. Setting

The IEP program continues for six months. During the period of IEP instruction and the ESP section, at which time this research study was conducted, students worked on language activities and problem solving tasks in groups ranging from two to five. The groups were mostly arbitrarily selected by the teacher. They were heterogeneous by gender, student achievement, and undergraduate majors. Students were generally either given roles by the teacher, or asked to decide themselves on the roles they would do. It was required that all students get actively involved in cooperative tasks by discussing issues, offering ideas and viewpoints, evaluating opinions of other group members. In a typical small group task, groups were expected to come to a consensus about the discussed issues and to provide solutions. The group work was then presented to the whole class. Each member was responsible for presenting a part of the task. The other groups were expected to post questions, ask for explanations or clarifications, and express grounded attitudes about the proposed ideas or solutions. To create a learning-supportive atmosphere which would encourage students to ask questions, request support and freely express their opinions, group work was not formally graded. It was orally evaluated by other groups and by the teacher.

3.2. The Participants

The participants were 30 students who had completed undergraduate degrees, some of whom had applied to the master's program in Business Administration, others to Industrial Engineering. They were heterogeneous in their educational background having BA degrees in Economics, Engineering, Mathematics, as well as English Language and Pedagogy. The level of English proficiency of the participants ranged from intermediate to higher intermediate according to their entrance TOEFL, midterm test and midterm teacher evaluations. Their minimum age was 23. All students had a rich experience of working in small groups

throughout their IEP instruction, and, as such, served as a convenient resource for this research. During the beginning ten weeks of IEP instruction the participants had been enrolled in different groups. The grouping had been done according to the entrance TOEFL scores. Prior to the ESP section of IEP, a new grouping was done according to which the participants were streamed into two groups with Business Administration/Industrial Engineering joint orientation for a subsequent nine weeks of ESP instruction.

3.3. Methodology

I am a teacher at the IEP program of AUA and the author of this research. Prior to this study I conducted two months of research in my group aimed at revealing student thought processes towards group work. It was a multiple case study based on the investigation of student diaries. Nine students participated in the research. In the process of the analysis of the data, some interesting themes regarding student perceptions of group learning were identified. I decided that a new study involving a larger number of cases would strengthen the findings of the previous research. Besides, involving two groups in the study would allow engaging students who had been taught by several teachers throughout the program, thus minimizing the influence of teacher related variables on student perceptions. The findings of the mentioned case study will be reported in another paper.

At the completion of the program a questionnaire was delivered to the two groups, a total number of thirty-five students. I had taught one of the groups. Two students were absent. All unclear points concerning the questionnaire were clarified. Not to use up class time, the completion of the questionnaire was assigned as homework. It was also assumed that if students worked on it at home, they would have more time to fully comprehend the questions, which would ensure the participants' meaningful contribution to the study. Since it was essential that the students express themselves fully and, furthermore, not to overload them by significant extra work that might be necessary to respond to the questionnaire in English, the

students were invited to write their responses in Armenian, English or Russian, depending on their preference. Thirty questionnaires were returned.

3.4. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was composed of questions aimed at revealing students' perceptions of the effect of various aspects of cooperative small group work on their learning productivity (see the Appendix for the questionnaire). A Likert Scale ranging from "very useful" to "not useful", and "uncertain" was used to measure students' perceptions of the effectiveness of group work in terms of learning English, accomplishment of learning tasks, and development of social skills. With respect to questions 7 and 8, which concerned student perceptions of the effect of atmosphere within small cooperative groups on individual learning and performance, a Likert Scale, ranging from "very important" to "not important" and "uncertain" was used for question 7, and "very much" to "not at all" for question 8. In addition, the respondents were asked to write their comments to explain their choices on the Likert Scales. The rest of the questions pertained to student expectations of group work, the problems they encountered when working in groups, and the improvements they would like to see made to the technique. In reference to these questions students were asked to write their reflective comments.

For questions containing the Likert Scale form, percentages for each item to the total number of respondents were calculated. Student reflective comments were sorted into response categories. For each category the frequency of occurrence of the responses that qualified for the category was recorded, and the percentage of the response to the total number of respondents was calculated. To minimize error, two teachers participated in the coding of the comments. The questionnaires were read two times by the teachers. The comments that showed differences in interpretation were studied by another instructor for resolution. In the process of the analysis a few responses were found that did not answer the question. These responses were not reported.

Chapter 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Students' Perceptions of the Purpose of Small Group Work

The analysis of the data showed that for almost all questions the students provided several answers. In reference to the purpose of small group work (see the appendix for question 1) in IEP/ESP the majority of the students gave more than one response. In the responses most student feedback pertained to three aspects of group work- its social/interpersonal and cognitive aspects, and its benefits for learning English. The social variable covers a significant part of the responses. It is expressed in categories 1, 9, 11, 12 (73.3% total; see Table 1). Students perceived that an essential purpose of group work is learning to work towards a common goal and to value cooperation over competition in the process of team work. One student emphasized getting to know each other better as an important purpose of group work.

Another student stressed the importance of learning interpersonal skills, namely arguing for one's own position in the face of diverse attitudes. Whereas in their comments the majority of students referred to the attainment of social skills in academic settings, the latter response concerned contexts reaching beyond academic contexts, namely future jobs that would require the accomplishment of cooperative tasks.

Students' perceptions of the cognitive purpose of small group work are reflected in categories 3, 5, 6, 7, 13, 18 (33.24% total). Students perceived that small group work facilitates learning from each other which has a positive effect on the cognitive development of individual students. It allows students to achieve higher degree of comprehension of the topic, enhances their critical thinking and problem solution skills.

Categories 2, 4 10, 15, 16 summarize student perceptions of the purpose of small group work for the development of their language skills. Overall 39.94% of the student comments referred to the benefits of small group work format for language learning. Among language

areas and skills that were positively affected by this learning format learners mentioned speaking and listening (20%), vocabulary development (3.3%), and the structure of English (6.6%). A few students perceived that the purpose of small group work is to help students overcome barriers when speaking in a foreign language (6.67%) and one student referred to learning to think in English as one of the main purposes of small group work. Categories 13 and 20 reflect student attitudes in terms of the benefits cooperative learning provides for maximizing student involvement in learning in general, and specifically in speaking activities (6.6% total). Other responses (categories 19, 21) reflect the attitudes of students who viewed small group work as a format that promotes a learning supportive emotional environment, and facilitates student interest thus providing an enjoyable way of learning.

Table1. – Students’ Perceptions of the Purpose of Small Group Work

Response Category	Frequency of Occurrence	Total (%) (N=30)
1. To learn to work as a team towards a common goal	17	56.70
2. To improve speaking and listening skills	6	20.00
3. To learn from each other	3	10.00
4. To enrich vocabulary	1	3.30
5. To help each other to understand the topic	2	6.67
6. To develop critical thinking skills	2	6.67
7. To evaluate the ideas of others	1	3.30
8. To accomplish tasks in restricted time	1	3.30
9. To get to know each other	1	3.30
10. To learn English grammar	2	6.67
11. To learn to pursue one’s position	1	3.30
12. To learn to value cooperation over competition	3	10.00
13. To comprehend different attitudes	1	3.30
14. To involve the whole class in a discussion	3	10.00
15. To overcome some barriers of speaking and listening	2	6.67
16. To learn to think in English	1	3.30
17. To get prepared for entering jobs requiring cooperative working skills	2	6.67
18. To recognize the advantages of group work for problem-solution tasks	1	3.30
19. To create relaxed atmosphere in the classroom	1	3.30
20. To facilitate student active involvement in learning	1	3.30
21. To make classes more interesting	1	3.30
22. Never thought of its purpose	1	3.30

4.2. Students’ Perceptions of More Successful Group Tasks and Activities

The first part of question 2 (see the Appendix for the questionnaire) served to remind students of the activities they had completed throughout the six month program. The analysis

of the data showed that all 30 respondents had completed case studies, group presentations and debates, 22 students – vocabulary quizzes and making an outline from listening, and only 18 – reading comprehension activities.

In their responses referring to the most beneficial group tasks and activities, the respondents tended to mention several activities, and explain their choice for each (Table 2). The analysis showed that the most favored group tasks were case studies and debates: 15 students favored case studies over other group tasks and activities, and 14 students considered debates to be more beneficial group tasks. It should be noted that 6 students out of the total number of students favoring case studies and debates reported no preference, stating that they were equally effective for them. With respect to the benefits of case studies, the respondents emphasized the cognitive dimension of small group work over its social and language teaching aspects. Categories 3, 4 and 6 under “case studies” summarize these responses (26.6%). Answers in categories 2 and 7 (13.3%) illustrate student attitudes that case studies have a positive influence on the development of their interpersonal skills. Case studies were also perceived by students as having a positive effect on the enhancement of language skills (categories 1, 5, 6), especially the speaking skill (13.3%). In addition, students expressed the view that case studies prepared them for further study in the university by developing their technical vocabulary and giving them an idea about the content areas they would cover in degree programs (categories 8 and 9).

14 students out of the total number of respondents considered debates a successful group activity. The majority of students agreed that debates are an effective aid to learning English. They mentioned the usefulness of debates in developing several language skills simultaneously (13.3%), enhancing listening (13.3%) and activating their English vocabulary (6.67%). Responses under category 5 (10%) emphasized the role of debates in developing students' communication skills in English. One student mentioned the efficiency of debates

in helping students to think in the target language. Categories 4, 8 and 10 reflect student attitudes on the role of debates for their cognitive development. These categories make 19, 97% of the responses. The remaining two categories (6 and 7) refer to the effect of debates on the enhancement of social skills (6.6%).

Group presentations occupied the third place after debates and case studies. In their responses some students strongly emphasized the effectiveness of this small group task for the enhancement of their speaking skills (13.3%). Students also mentioned the positive effect of the preparation phase of group presentations on their cognitive development and enhancement of behavioral skills. They perceived that group presentations enhanced learning from each other which allowed them to achieve a deeper comprehension of the task. Exchanging diverse attitudes and evaluating each other's ideas was viewed as one of the major benefits of group presentations. One student noted the positive impact of group presentations on the development of students' knowledge of the structure of English.

In reference to vocabulary quizzes, the respondents mentioned only the language learning aspect emphasizing the positive effect of such activities on the enhancement of their English vocabulary (13.3%).

Three students commented that making outlines from listening helped them develop their study skills, and other two students explained that this task helps them enhance their comprehensive listening skills since advanced group members draw their attention to the details in listening passages. Out of 18 students who had completed comprehensive reading exercises (in groups of two) no student specified this activity as being more useful or wrote any comments in reference to it.

In sum, the vast majority of students perceived that the most successful small group tasks in EGAP/ESP instruction were those involving both the cognitive and interpersonal dimensions of cooperative learning, as well as language learning points.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of the Most Successful Small Group Tasks and Activities in Terms of the Benefits They Provide

Response Category	Frequency of Occurrence	Total (%) (N=30)
Debates:		
1. Develops simultaneously several skills	4	13.30
2. Helps me to think in English	1	3.30
3. Activates vocabulary	2	6.67
4. Helps to comprehend the task better	1	3.30
5. Develops communication skills	3	10.00
6. Helps to become more tolerant	1	3.30
7. Helps to know each other better	1	3.30
8. Helps to evaluate ideas and define the most successful ones	2	6.67
9. Develops the listening skills	4	13.30
10. Helps to learn from others	3	10.00
Case studies:		
1. Develops several skills: speaking, making an outline	1	3.30
2. Enhances cooperation	1	3.30
3. Improves critical thinking	3	10.00
4. Improves problem solving skills	4	13.30
5. Improves speaking skills	4	13.30
6. Develops comprehensive reading	1	3.30
7. Develops interpersonal skills	3	10.00
8. Gives an idea about what topics will be studied in content courses	1	3.30
9. Helps to learn professional terms in future content areas	1	3.30
Group Presentations:		
1. To comprehend the structure of English sentences	1	3.30
2. To develop speaking skills	4	13.30
3. To learn from friends	2	6.67
4. To comprehend the task	2	6.67
Vocabulary Quiz:		
1. To improve English	1	3.30
2. To increase vocabulary	4	13.30

4.3. Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of Small Group Work in Terms of Learning English

In response to this question, as can be seen from the provided data, the majority of the respondents (76.67%) evaluated group work as very useful/useful. Only 16.7% of the respondents considered small group work not useful.

Student responses (Table 3b) referred to the positive impact of small group work on the enrichment of their active vocabulary (6.67%) and the development of speaking skills (13.3%). A considerable number of students stressed the advantages of the small group

format in terms of providing more opportunities for communication in the classroom (30%). Student responses made explicit the motivational aspect of group work. The positive effect of small group format on student motivation to learn is summarized in categories 4 under “very useful” and 6, 8, 9 under “useful”. Student responses falling under these categories illustrate that small group learning acted as a motivator for the enhancement of student knowledge of the English language and of speaking skills. In their responses students also mentioned the benefits of group work for their listening skills and the mastery of organizational patterns in speech.

The students who perceived group work as being not useful (16.7%) attributed this attitude to the usage of native tongue by students during small group work (6.67%), and the low level of teacher control, which, according to them, might result in the fossilization of mistakes (6.67%). One student expressed the opinion that cooperative learning might not work for students having an individual learning style.

Table3a.

Very useful	Useful	Not useful	Uncertain
4 (6.67%)	21(70%)	5 (16.7%)	0

Table3b. Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of Small Group Work In Terms of Learning English

Response Category	Frequency of Occurrence	Total (%) (N=30)
Very useful:		
1. Developed active vocabulary	2	6.67
2. Students helped each other to find appropriate words	1	3.30
3. Gave more opportunities to communicate	3	10.00
4. Urged students to formulate ideas in mind in short time, thus teaching them to think in English	1	3.30
Useful:		
1. Develops speaking skills	4	13.30
2. Allows to use new vocabulary	5	16.70
3. Gives an opportunity to use the language	3	10.00
4. Helps to organize speech	2	6.67
5. Allows to discuss topics from different fields	1	3.30
6. Motivates to learn grammar and vocabulary	2	6.67
7. Develops listening skills	1	3.30
8. Helps students evaluate their knowledge of English	2	6.67
9. Motivates students to speak correctly	3	10.00
10.Improves communication skills	6	20.00
	3	10.00
Not useful:		
1. Students speak in their native language	2	6.67
2. Mistakes are not corrected because of little teacher control	2	6.67
3. Some students have individual learning styles	1	3.30
Uncertain:		
	0	0

4.4. Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of Small Group Work in Terms of Accomplishing an Assignment

The purpose of asking question 4 (see the questionnaire) was to suggest to students that small group learning provides a supportive environment for accomplishing complex tasks that require multiple efforts, and that being able to work in cooperative small group contexts is essential for their academic achievement across university degree programs, as well as for their future careers. It was also assumed that this question would reveal those aspects of

cooperative accomplishment of tasks that are perceived by students as negative to show the teachers what specific instructional alterations might be necessary.

The provided data show that the majority of the students evaluated their experience of cooperative accomplishment of tasks as very useful/useful (76.7%). The cognitive aspect of cooperative learning is emphasized in category 4 under "useful" (see Table 4). 20% of the students shared the attitude that small group learning allows them to enhance the efficiency of the provided solutions to various group problem solution tasks, helps them to view the tasks from multiple perspectives (3.3%), allows to accomplish complex tasks requiring more than individual effort (6.67%). The students emphasized the interactional component stating that small group learning enhances mutual help (category 1, 3 under "very useful", and 6 under "useful"; 9.9% total). A significant percentage (13.3%) was given to the benefits of group learning in terms of using class time effectively. The students also mentioned that working in small group settings enhances student interest in the assigned task and provides an easier way of learning in that even if not all students are prepared well, the task can still be successfully completed. One student mentioned that the benefits of accomplishing tasks in a small group is that in the process of the discussion of multiple approaches to the task, students assess the strengths and weaknesses of their own opinions and approaches.

Only four students evaluated small group learning in terms of accomplishing a task as not effective. Most responses referred to the unequal distribution of responsibility in groups (6.67%). Students noted that cooperative accomplishment of assignments does not reflect individual contributions. One respondent expressed the attitude that because the task is accomplished by mutual effort and not by separate students, some points may not be fully comprehended by individual students.

The respondents who checked the option "uncertain" emphasized interactional patterns stating that the successful completion of tasks depends on how smoothly students interact in a

group and how sensitive they are to the mood of other group members. It was mentioned that the nature of the task might also play a significant role on how well it will be accomplished: tasks referring to interesting themes and related to the educational background of the students generate more student involvement.

Table 4a.

Very useful	Useful	Not useful	Uncertain
5 (16.7%)	18(60%)	4 (6.67%)	3 (10%)

Table 4b. Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of Small Group Work in Terms of Accomplishing an Assignment

Response Category	Frequency of Occurrence	Total (%) (N=30)
Very useful:		
1. Group members help each other	1	3.30
2. The task is successfully accomplished even if not all members are prepared	1	3.30
3. Group members help each other not to deviate from the topic	1	3.30
Useful:		
1. Each group member can see his/her weak points	2	6.67
2. Allows to accomplish complex tasks	2	6.67
3. Class time is used effectively	4	13.30
4. Helps students to find effective solutions of problems	6	20.00
5. Helps to view the topic from different angles	1	3.30
6. Enhances mutual support of group members	1	3.30
7. Is more interesting than individual work	1	3.30
Not useful:		
1. Does not reflect students' knowledge	1	3.30
2. One person takes the responsibility for the whole group	2	6.67
3. Some points of the subject matter may remain unclear	1	3.30
Uncertain:		
1. The bad mood of one member may affect the whole group	2	6.67
2. It depends on the theme or the group	1	3.30

4.5. Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of Small Group Work in Terms of Developing Social Skills

As can be seen from data displayed in Table 5a, the vast majority of students (90%) perceived small group learning as an effective technique for learning to work together. Categories 1 under "very useful" and 8 under "useful" (Table 5b) summarize those replies in which the respondents expressed the attitude that group learning positively affects the

development of their interaction skills (20%) and plays a great role in gaining the experience of cooperating with others (16.7%). Other categories were more specific in nature; they summarized responses referring to a range of personal and interpersonal skills that are developed in the process of small group work, such as leadership qualities and a number of teamwork related patterns. Such interpersonal skills were emphasized as coming to a consensus (6.67%), displaying empathy towards other group members (10%), approaching opposite opinions with open-mindedness and respect (categories 6 and 7 under “useful” (13.34% total) (See Table 5b for more details).

Table 5a.

Very useful	Useful	Not useful	Uncertain
12 (40%)	15 (50%)	1(3.3%)	2 (6.67%)

Table 5b. Students’ Perceptions of the Usefulness of Small Group Work in Terms of Developing Social Skills

Response Category	Frequency of Occurrence	Total (%) (N=30)
Very useful:		
1. Helps to develop interaction skills	6	20.00
2. Helps to come to an agreement when there is conflict among opinions	2	6.67
3. Helps to evaluate one’s own skills in terms of dealing with others	1	3.30
4. Gives interpersonal skills for future life	1	3.30
Useful:		
1. Helps to feel as a member of a team	1	3.30
2. Helps to argue one’s position	1	3.30
3. Helps to develop leadership skills	2	6.67
4. Helps to learn more about human behavior	3	10.00
5. Helps to take control of one’s own feelings	1	3.30
6. Helps to become more tolerant to other opinions	2	6.67
7. Helps to respect other opinions	2	6.67
8. Helps to gain more experience in interacting with people	5	16.70
9. Helps to develop appropriate tone when disagreeing with others	2	6.67
10. Helps to be sensitive to the feelings of others	3	10.00
Not useful:		
1. Since AUA applicants are grown up people with already shaped character, group work doesn’t develop social skills but only allows these skills to become apparent	1	3.30
Uncertain:		
1. It is not group work that will develop the ability of dealing with others	1	3.30

4.6. Students' Perceptions of the Difficulties They Encountered in The Process of Small Group Learning

Question 6 (See the appendix for the questionnaire) was asked to reveal students' attitudes in reference to the difficulties of cooperative learning in EGAP in order for the teachers to address their concerns in the future. The high number of 'no response' to this question is conditioned by the fact that many students felt they did not encounter specific difficulties in the provided areas as it was explained by the respondents themselves after the questionnaires were submitted.

In terms of language learning, a relatively high percent of responses referred to the low language level of group members (10%). Some students stated that the inappropriate language level of their peers frustrated them because, first, they were exposed to incorrect English, and, second, their own speaking time was minimized which hindered the development of their speaking skills. Two students (6.67%) reported dissatisfaction with the fact that group members used their native tongue, especially if there was too much disagreement between group members, or when a very complicated topic necessitated a sophisticated vocabulary to present one's attitude to peers. These students stated that using the native tongue minimized linguistic input in the target language and hindered their communication in English. Three students (categories 3 and 6 under "learning English") attributed the difficulties they encountered during group learning to their own low level of language skills, specifically to insufficient vocabulary (3.3%) and poor speaking skills (6.67%). Students stated that those two factors slowed down their performance. That exacerbated peers' impatience, which resulted in the creation of a negative emotional climate within the group. Category 4 summarizes the responses in which students perceived a lack of turn-taking as another factor having a negative effect on the development of speaking skills (10%). Some students stated that they did not get actively involved in group work because of

their unsupportive partners. Finally, one student expressed the attitude that uninteresting tasks, as well as those for the completion of which background knowledge of specific content areas was needed, might discourage students from active involvement in group learning, limiting their usage of the target language.

In reference to difficulties in the process of task completion most responses concerned interactional patterns. Category 3 summarizes student perceptions concerning the negative effect of individual students forcing their opinion on other members of the group. Students stated that the forced ideas were not always right, and their acceptance by other members did not allow the group to arrive at decisions leading to the successful accomplishment of the task. In responses grouped under category 5 the respondents expressed their views concerning the effect the role of the leader plays on task accomplishment. One student stated that the lack of a leader in a group prevents the group from building a consensus. Two other students agreed with this attitude adding that teachers have to be careful in their pedagogical considerations not to allow inappropriate grouping when two or more students, being authoritarian in nature, take on the leader role for themselves, and the whole group work is turned into a dialogue or a conversation between these students. One student perceived deviation of some group members from the theme and emphasized the role of the group leader in helping group members stay on the topic. In responses under category 2 the students mentioned that the inability of group members to come to a group decision has a negative impact on the accomplishment of the task. Diverse concepts towards the ways of accomplishing the assignment, and variety of opinions concerning the solutions of the task were specified as factors impeding the process of consensus building. In this context the role of the leader as of group coordinator was strongly emphasized by the students. Unequal distribution of obligations was also perceived by some students as having a negative effect on the accomplishment of the task (10%). In reference to this, two respondents mentioned that

not all students took their responsibilities to the group adequately, and also that the nature of individual contributions often remained unexposed to the teacher. Related to this are the responses summarized in category 2. Another difficulty students perceived in terms of task accomplishment was that group work is more time demanding than working by oneself (6.67%).

In relation to difficulties students came across in the process of interacting with group members, the students referred to a range of interpersonal and personal factors which were perceived as having a negative impact on cooperative learning (Table 6). The presence of highly persuasive people in a small group was considered the most unconstructive factor for the effective development of group learning (20%, category 7). In this category fell the responses in which students expressed the attitude that group work was frustrated because of the authoritarian character of some students who made every effort to force their opinions on peers, especially if there were several such students in the same group (10%). A few students mentioned that peers displaying such characteristic features are highly competitive in general, and that their presence in groups makes the atmosphere within the group competitive which aggravates tension and promotes anxiety (10%). One student attributed the persuasiveness of some members to their older age rather than authoritarian nature. In responses under category 2 students perceived that confrontations within groups disturbed group performance. According to the respondents, the emergence of such confrontations was conditioned by unfavorable out-of-class personal relations (10%) and the lack of goal-orientedness when disagreements between group members predominated over the desire to accomplish the task (13.3%). Another difficulty students were faced with was arriving at a group decision (category 4). According to students, this was conditioned by the fact that the time allotted to group work was not enough for discussing and evaluating the diverse attitudes emerging in the process of group discussion on the basis of which mutual decision had to be made.

Some students perceived that it was difficult for them to interact with group members and meanwhile stay concentrated on the task (13.3%). Three students exhibited high frustration towards “non-stop talkers”, who would not give others the opportunity to participate. Some respondents perceived that the “unfriendliness” of group members or their inadequate attention to their opinions created difficulties for them (16.7%). One student mentioned that differences in mentalities of group members could have a negative impact. This response was not sufficiently specific.

Table 6. Students’ Perceptions of the Difficulties They Encountered in the Process of Small Group Learning

Response Category	Frequency of Occurrence	Total (%) (N=30)
Learning English:		
1. Taking a passive role because of unsupportive partners	3	10.00
2. When group members spoke Armenian	2	6.67
3. My poor vocabulary	1	3.30
4. Lack of opportunity to speak	3	10.00
5. Inappropriate language level of group members	3	10.00
6. My poor speaking skills	2	6.67
7. No difficulty was encountered, only motivated to learn English better	3	10.00
8. No explanation was given	8	26.70
9. Taking a passive role because of the uninteresting assignment	1	3.30
Accomplishing an Assignment:		
1. Requires much time	2	6.67
2. Lack of consensus among group members	3	10.00
3. Arguing for one’s own position	5	16.70
4. Passive partners	2	6.67
5. Inappropriate distribution of the role of the leader	3	10.00
6. Unequal distribution of responsibility	3	10.00
7. No difficulties, it only helps	6	20.00
8. No explanation was given	9	30.00
Interacting with other Group Members:		
1. The difficulty to concentrate	4	13.30
2. Confrontation with each other	5	16.70
3. Negative attitudes of group members	5	16.70
4. Consensus building	3	10.00
5. Different mentality of group members	1	3.30
6. Lack of turn-taking	3	10.00
7. Highly persuasive group members	6	20.00
8. No difficulties	3	10.00
9. No explanation was given	3	10.00
Other:	0	0

4.7. Students' Perceptions of the Effect of Small Group Environment on Their Learning

Question 7 (see the appendix) was asked to reveal to what extent students felt they were affected by the psychological atmosphere within small groups, to identify their expectations of small group atmosphere and to define what specific components of learning they perceived as being affected by group emotional environment.

As can be seen from the data in Table 7a, the respondents exhibited a high degree of sensitivity to the emotional climate in small groups. The majority of the students perceived it to be very important (63.3%), or somewhat important (26.7%), only two students (6.67%) as not important. One student expressed uncertainty.

The vast majority of students believed that the emotional atmosphere in small groups should be cooperative, based on mutual support and respect (Table 7b). 23.1% of the students expressed the view that a cooperative emotional climate has a positive impact on their learning productivity in terms of accomplishing complex academic tasks (23.1%). Some respondents emphasized the favorable effect of cooperative atmosphere on their motivation to learn (13.3%), and active involvement in learning (10%). Three students perceived that cooperative atmosphere encouraged them to increase individual contributions to group task. A few students stated that in addition it maximized learning from others (10%). The respondents also mentioned that as opposed to individual learning settings which are mostly competitive in nature, cooperative small group settings produce anxiety free environments providing a more enjoyable way of learning (13.3%). Finally, category 2 summarizes student answers in which the respondents strongly emphasized the view that a significant aim of working in small groups was preparing students for team work both in and out of academic contexts. They perceived that the basis of team work is cooperation, therefore other atmosphere than cooperative was viewed by these students as opposing the very aim of small

group work. Only one student, together with stressing the importance of cooperative atmosphere in small groups, emphasized the role of competition in the classroom stating that after accomplishing tasks by cooperative effort in the frame of a small group, a cross- group discussion should take place, so that groups compete with each other.

Of the two respondents who checked the option “not important” only one provided an explanation stating that the question did not seem significant for him/her because, according to some personal observations, the atmosphere in small groups in Armenia is in general cooperative. No explanation was provided by the student who expressed uncertainty about the issue.

Table 7a.

Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Uncertain
19 (63.3%)	8 (26.7%)	2 (6.67%)	1 (3.3%)

Table 7b. – Students’ Perceptions of the Role of Cooperative Atmosphere in Learning.

Response Category	Frequency of Occurrence	Total (%) (N=30)
1. Cooperative atmosphere positively influences the successful accomplishment of the task	7	23.10
2. Without cooperation there is no sense to work in small group format	5	16.70
3. Non cooperative atmosphere influences negatively on student motivation to learn	4	13.30
4. Cooperative atmosphere increases the extent of individual contributions to group work	3	10.00
5. Cooperative atmosphere facilitates learning from each other	3	10.00
6. Cooperative atmosphere promotes students’ active involvement in learning	3	10.00
7. Cooperative atmosphere reduces tension thus making learning more enjoyable	4	13.30

4.8. Students’ Perceptions of the Effect of Small Group Learning on Their Individual Performances

Question 8 is related to question 7 (see the appendix for the questionnaire). This question was asked because, as mentioned in the “Setting of the Study” section of this paper, small group tasks in EGAP instruction were not formally graded to make a part of the final grade of individual students, but two times throughout the program (at the midterm and the

completion of the program) the students were evaluated by the teacher, and in these evaluations individual students' performance in the frame of small group learning was reflected. It was assumed that the identification of students' perceptions in reference to the effect of group atmosphere on their individual performance would help teachers to make rational alterations in the grading system.

A considerable number of students perceived that their individual performance in the frame of small group learning was very much (33.3 %) or somewhat (40%) affected by the emotional climate within the group. Only 5 students (16.7%) perceived little effect of group atmosphere on their individual performance, and one student felt his/her performance was not at all affected by the group psychological environment (Table 8).

Table 8.

Very much	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
10 (33.3%)	14 (40%)	5 (16.7%)	1 (3.3%)

In addition to the numerical data, the students wrote comments explaining their answers. The great spread of responses did not allow displaying the data in a table as it was done for the preceding questions.

The analysis of student written comments on this question showed that the students perceived that whereas the emotional tone in small groups was supportive, the active involvement of all students in group learning and the motivation of all group members to have their share in the accomplishment of the assignment generated successful individual performance, the absence of these factors set the tone for anxiety and emotional discomfort, which had a negative effect on individual performance. Three students emphasized the role of the teacher in minimizing the negative effects of an unfavorable group climate on individual performances. These students noted that the difficulties they encountered in the process of small group learning had a minimal or no effect on their performance because the teacher

required that all the groups respond to the whole class and that all students in the group have a share both in the preparation and presentation phases of group assignments.

From student responses it became apparent that the basic element that helped students perform well even when they displayed a high level of sensitivity to unfavorable group atmosphere was their motivation to learn and to perform well in the face of their peers (6 students). Two students attributed the low effect of the group emotional atmosphere on their individual performance to their personal qualities and interpersonal skills, such as leadership, experience in teamwork and communication.

4.9. Students' Perceptions of the Most Effective Instructional Format

In response to indicating their preferred instructional format (see the appendix for question 9), more than half percent of the respondents (53.3%) either checked more than one option or chose the category "other". To avoid confusion in the presentation of the data, all these responses are grouped under "other" and the details are shown in Table 9b.

The numerical data are displayed in Table 9a. The majority of the students perceived small group work as the most effective instructional format. Among these students 20% preferred working with a small group, and somewhat fewer (16.7%) preferred working with a single partner. Only a small percentage of students favored working by themselves (10%).

The students who favored small group style emphasized its benefits for the development of their interaction skills and the enhancement of specific language skills (categories 2 and 5). Category 1 summarizes student comments in reference to the enjoyable way of learning that group work provides. In their responses the students perceived that the different attitudes and approaches their partners demonstrate in group discussions and problem solution tasks due to their diverse educational backgrounds and life experiences make learning more interesting and enhance the cognitive development of the participants. Student comments in category 3

referred to the advantages of small group work in terms of lessening the dependence on each other as compared to pair work.

Those students who preferred working with a single partner perceived that it gave more opportunities to speak English, especially to those students who were shy. These students emphasized that pair work strongly enhances student responsibility to participate. It was also mentioned that this format is more beneficial than individual learning since it combines the effort of two partners which enhances the productivity of learning. With respect to pair work more emphasis was put on the interactional component (16.7%): the students believed that it was easier to deal with a single partner than with a group of people. One note referred to its being more effective in terms of requiring less time than group work.

Only three students supported working by oneself. Two students referred to the benefits this format provides for self-evaluation. These students stated that when working by oneself on tasks a student will not ascribe group members' successes to himself/herself, but will clearly see what he/she has already acquired and what has still to be learned. This will help students in making objective judgments about themselves for organizing their own learning. One student noted that the instructional format in which students work by themselves allows the teacher to make appropriate judgments about individual students since in this case the quality and extent of individual contribution is easily observable as opposed to when students are working in groups. It was in this context that the benefit of working by oneself in terms of enhancing student responsibility was mentioned (category 2).

Responses grouped under the category "other" indicate that a considerable number of students (53.3%) did not give preference to a specific instructional format, but demonstrated a willingness to work in multiple formats (26.6%). Most students explained this preference by the belief that specific formats work better with some academic tasks than others. One student expressed the view that successful work depends not on the instructional format, but

on other factors, such as the theme and the task, situation or partners. Another student chose working either with a small group or a single partner attributing this choice to the fun component these formats provide as opposed to individual learning. An attitude was expressed that all formats were effective; therefore, it would not be right to specify any. One student commented that all formats were beneficial and suggested that a new instructional format be added -- a teacher-student partnership when a student would meet the teacher according to a prearranged schedule for thematic one-to-one conversations aimed at the development of students' speaking skills to the level of native like speech.

Table 9a.

With a small group	With a single partner	By myself	Other
6 (20%)	5 (16.7%)	3 (10%)	16 (53.3%)

Table 9b. – Students' Perceptions of the Most Effective Instructional Format

Response Category	Frequency of Occurrence	Total (%) (N=30)
With a Small Group:		
1. Is more interesting	2	6.67
2. Is more useful for learning English	3	10.00
3. Less dependence on one partner as compared with pair-work	2	6.67
4. Convenient for discussions, debates, presentations	1	3.30
5. Enhances social skills	2	6.67
With a Single Partner:		
1. More effective when time is limited	1	3.30
2. Easier to work, than by oneself	1	3.30
3. Two people is the appropriate number for working effectively together	1	3.30
4. More chance to speak English than in group work	1	3.30
5. More responsibility to participate	1	3.30
6. It is easier to negotiate with one partner than with several	5	16.70
By Myself:		
1. Allows to see your own strengths and weaknesses	2	6.67
2. Responsibility is higher	2	6.67
Other:		
1. It depends on the activity	8	26.40
2. Speaking classes of English with individual students	1	3.30
3. All are effective	1	3.30
4. Depends on the theme, situation and partner	1	3.30
5. Working in groups or in pairs is more interesting than by oneself	1	3.30

4.10. Students' Suggestions Aimed at the Improvement of Small Group Instructional Format

Question 10 asked the students to write their suggestions about the adjustments they would like to see made to small group instruction in IEP. Student suggestions are displayed in Table 10. Since a significant spread of responses was observed, to maintain order in showing the responses, they were grouped under general headings according to the themes that emerged (see table 10).

Some students perceived that the optimal number of students in small groups should not exceed 4 (10%). This assumption was associated with two factors-the language classroom and interactional patterns. A few respondents believed that 3 to 4 students in a group would provide all participants with enough speaking opportunities in the target language and, in addition, would ensure an appropriate level of positive interdependence. From student comments, it became evident that students approved of both teacher and student selected groups. In this context two students perceived that at the beginning of the course the teacher has to do the grouping, and later, when the students already know each other they can select the groups by themselves. One student noted that the teacher has to group students according to their ability to work smoothly with each other.

A significant part of responses referred to the necessity of increasing the level of students' accountability (23.3% total). A student emphasized the importance of implementing specific strategies for making each student responsible for a part of the group task. It was suggested that the teacher assign a task as homework prior to working at it in small groups in the classroom.

A number of responses referred to the necessity of increasing student motivation to get actively involved in group learning (26.67% total). A few students suggested bringing

interesting topics referring to current issues into the classroom (6.67 %). To increase extrinsic motivation, some students offered the suggestion of incorporating a punishment- and- reward system by grading the group tasks and making the mark a part of the individual grades (16. 7%).

In terms of assigning roles to students, a student expressed the preference of not being assigned a specific role that obliged a student to work at a specific part of the group task, but of working together on all parts of the task to complete it with mutual effort. This, according to the student would make the atmosphere more cooperative and would enhance the feeling of team membership. Other students emphasized the role of the leader, stating that the presence of a leader makes the group more cohesive (6.67%). The teacher role was specified in terms of assigning the role of the leader to a student in each group and monitoring that no other students perform a leading role in a group. This, according to the students would help to avoid conflicts that happen when more than one student in a group perform the role of the leader (6.67%).

One comment referred to the role of the teacher in preparing students for group cooperative learning. The student noted that the teacher, prior to intensively using small group instructional format, should explain its purpose to the students. In respect to the psychological preparedness of peers to cooperative learning, a student expressed strong doubts that students would be able to psychologically adjust themselves to the new learning mode, thus emphasizing that to maintain a cooperative culture, students with a traditional academic background still have a long way to go.

Some of the suggestions referred to language related issues. Good speaking skills were viewed by some respondents as a necessary prerequisite for students' successful contribution to group work (10%). A student suggested reducing the grades given for the speaking skills if the student spoke in native tongue during group learning. In addition, a number of students

specified the need for more focus on the target language (6.67%). They perceived that this would allow minimizing grammar errors, achieving accuracy and complexity of language necessary for their success in university content courses.

Finally, a number of student responses referred to maximizing learning opportunities. A student perceived the need to complete group work not only in class, but out of class, and to perform specific roles within small group contexts that would be applicable to real life situations, such as conducting meetings, signing an agreement, participating in negotiations. Some respondents also expressed the desire that the teachers listen to student voices to be able to respond to their concerns (13.3%).

Table 10. Students' Suggestions Aimed at the Improvement of Small Group Instructional Format

Response category	Frequency of Occurrence	Total (%) (N=30)
Grouping:		
1. The number of participants should not exceed 4	3	10.00
2. Grouping has to be done both by the teacher and students	1	3.30
3. When grouping the teacher has to consider the ability of group members to work together	1	3.30
Increasing self-accountability:		
1. Each student in a group should be given a share of the group's task	3	10.00
2. Specific instructional strategies have to be implemented to increase students' responsibility	4	13.30
Increasing student motivation		
1. Students should try to be more self-motivated	1	3.30
2. The themes, tasks and materials should be carefully selected by the instructor	2	6.67
3. Group assignment should be graded	5	16.70
Assigning roles		
1. There should be a leader in each group	2	6.67
2. The teacher should not allow several leaders get into one and the same group	2	6.67
3. Students should not be assigned specific roles	1	3.30
Preparing students for cooperative learning		
1. The purpose of group learning should be explained to students	1	3.30
2. It's hardly possible to improve the psychology of students	1	3.30
Language related issues:		
1. To participate well students should have appropriate speaking skills	3	10.00
2. Student grammar and vocabulary mistakes have to be corrected	2	6.67
3. More measures should be taken not to allow students to speak in their native tongue	1	3.30
Expanding learning opportunities:		
1. Students should be given specific roles that would prepare them for performing similar roles in life	1	3.30
2. Students must complete group home assignments	1	3.30
3. Teachers should encourage student voices to be able to respond to their needs	4	13.30

Chapter 5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The general question addressed in this study is “What are intermediate students’ perceptions of small group learning in the IEP program at American University of Armenia?” I had hoped that the investigation of student perspectives on group learning would allow two questions underlying this general question to be answered, namely how students conceptualized small group learning in terms of their future academic and professional needs, and what difficulties they perceived in relation to this learning format. In addition, I believed this study would help to promote a successful paradigm shift in other Armenian schools interested in implementing small group learning techniques by providing educators with an understanding of what students who have been exposed to group learning may feel towards their new experience and what concerns they may have.

This study found that our students preferred small group learning to individual learning formats. The majority of the students, responding to the questionnaire, showed a strong preference for small group learning. This finding can be attributed to three factors. First, our students were surveyed at the end of the IEP program; therefore, they had been exposed to group learning for approximately five months -- a period long enough not only to become familiar with this learning format, but also to feel its personal and educational benefits. Furthermore, this preference can be attributed to students’ understanding that small group learning was essential for their academic success in terms of their preparedness for the new academic culture. Finally, our students’ preference for small group learning may have cultural roots. A recent quantitative study on learning styles and language learning strategies of Armenian undergraduate and graduate students (Ginosyan & Sargsyan, 2004) found that the vast majority of the students surveyed (84%) were extroverts. Kiersey & Bates (1984, p.14)), described extroverts as those who “appear to be energized or ‘turned up’ by people”

(p.14). In the classroom they prefer “hands-on activities, group work and talking” (Torkelson, 1995, p.140). This suggests that Armenian students, being extroverted, tend to have a social style of learning. In addition, it was found that many students favored pair work explaining this choice by citing the advantages this group format provides in terms of increased opportunities for individual contributions, less dependence on students’ interpersonal skills and more opportunities for communication. This suggests that students should be given the opportunity to work in multiple group formats □ both in small groups and in pairs. This would allow addressing diverse learning styles.

A major finding of my research is that overall students perceived small group learning to be positive in terms of producing more opportunities to communicate in the target language than the traditional instructional formats. Furthermore, students reported the positive effect of small group learning on their cognitive development, motivation to learn, enhancement of their interpersonal skills, as well as emotional well being. This attitude shows that students in the IEP view small group learning to be consistent with cooperative learning principles, which have their roots (i) in theories of social interdependence and tend to emphasize the motivational aspect of cooperative learning, and (ii) in cognitive development theories that are based on the assumption that “cooperation must proceed cooperative growth” (Morgan, p.2, 2003). According to social interdependence theory, cooperation results from the positive relationship of individuals to accomplish a common goal (Morgan, 2003). The findings of my research have some parallel with Kurt Lewin’s (1948) ideas and Morton Deutsch’s (1998) social interdependence theory. Kurt Lewin (1948) stated that “interdependence from common goals provides the essential essence of a group”, and that “the power of a group is such that a change in any member or a subgroup directly changes any other member or subgroup” (Kurt Lewin, 1948, as cited in Morgan, 2003). This research has found that students perceive positive interdependence, when all group members combine their efforts to achieve a

common goal, as a prerequisite for the productivity of their groups. In his social interdependence theory Morton Deutsch (1998) noted that interdependence can be positive (cooperation), negative (competition), or nonexistent (individualistic efforts) (Johnson, et al., 1998, as cited in Morgan, p. 2, 2003). Johnson et al. summarized that positive interdependence happens when “one perceives that one is linked with others in a way so that one cannot succeed unless they do (and vice versa) and/or one must coordinate one’s efforts with the efforts of others to complete the task (Johnson et al., 1995, p. 31, as cited in Dörnyei, p 484, 1997). These explanations of social interdependence parallel the results of my research in that students, perceiving the existence of all these forms of interdependence in their small groups, emphasized the need for cooperative interdependence and reported a direct relationship between positive interdependence and the productivity of group work.

According to cognitive development theory, cooperation facilitates higher order thinking resulting in cognitive growth. Piaget (1965) believed that “cooperation of individuals on the environment results in healthy socio-cognitive conflict that creates cognitive disequilibrium, which then stimulates perspective taking ability and cognitive development” (Piaget, 1965, as cited in Morgan, p. 2, 2003). The findings of this study are consistent with cognitive development theory; a significant part of responses referred to the advantages of cooperative learning for the enhancement of cognitive growth. Students expressed recognition of the role of cooperative learning for facilitating learning from each other, dealing with a diversity of attitudes, arguing for their own position, and building a consensus.

A consistency was also found between students’ perceptions of small group learning and research findings in terms of the effect of cooperative learning on the emotional well being of students. Students perceived that cooperative learning, as opposed to individualistic learning, generated less anxiety and tension, promoted their self esteem and confidence. These results

parallel those of Deci & Ryan (1985), which indicate that cooperation, as compared with other formats, produces lower levels of anxiety and stress.

In addition to mentioning the positive effect of small group cooperative learning on their motivation to learn, cognitive growth and emotional well being, a considerable number of students noted its being an effective aid for communication in the classroom and for the development of their speaking skills. These findings are partially consistent with the results of the research conducted with Spanish L1 learners of English in Mexico city (Long, Adams, McLean and Castanos, 1976, as cited in Pica, 1994), which showed that group learning allowed students "to use language across a broader range of interpersonal functions than did lock step, teacher-led instruction (Pica, 1994).

Therefore, overall students felt their small group learning in the IEP program to be a valuable experience in terms of developing their language skills and preparing them for the new academic culture they needed to acquire to address their future academic goals.

It should be noted that in spite of the overall positive attitudes, the students also expressed some frustration with small group learning in specific areas and made suggestions for the further enhancement of this instructional format. In their written comments students specified those group characteristics and group processes that had an unfavorable effect on their cooperative learning. Among them they mentioned the high level of persuasiveness of some partners, some classmates' inability to manage conflicts and arrive at a group consensus, the lack of individual obligation to the group, the absence of the leader in a group or more than one person performing the leader role and, finally, the passive participation of group mates in cooperative learning. Some of the group processes mentioned, such as forcing one's position on others, conflicting with one another, not being able to come to a group decision, can be explained by the lack of social skills of some students. Johnson and Johnson (1995), mentioning the conditions for effective cooperative learning, specified the role of

social skills, stating that simply placing students in groups and encouraging them to work together may not ensure successful interaction, and that social skills might need to be taught (Johnson and Johnson, 1995, as cited in Dörnyei, 1997).

As mentioned above, students also expressed concerns with respect to the lack of a sense of obligation of some students to the group. Related to this, some students perceived that the nature of individual contributions was not always known to the teacher. In terms of student's perceptions of individual accountability in cooperative groups, the findings of this study partially parallel the results of Mulryan's research in which the vast majority of the respondents expressed the attitude that there was no individual accountability in their small groups, and that the teacher did not hold individual students responsible for group work (Mulryan, 1994). Researchers in the field of teaching have suggested ways of enhancing positive interdependence and individual accountability in cooperative groups. Olsen and Kogan (1992), in suggesting ways of enhancing students' motivation to work collaboratively, emphasized the importance of giving team scores in addition to individual grades. They also suggested assigning roles to students to ensure the participation of all group members. In addition, Olsen and Kogan (1992) offered setting rules that would stress the "shared nature of responsibility for the group product (e.g., no one can proceed to some new project or material before every other group has completed the previous assignment), (Olsen and Kogan, 1992, as cited in Dörnyei, p. 484, 1997). These principles are appropriate for any cooperative learning environment and can be implemented in the IEP program as well. The implementation of these principles would allow the teacher to address the concerns of those students who mentioned the desirability of implementing strategies that would enhance students' responsibility for the whole group and their self accountability.

As mentioned above, among the difficulties they encountered during group work, some students stated that the lack of a leader in a group affected their learning negatively. The

desire to have a leader in a group may be related to students' need for group cohesiveness. According to Kellerman (1981), leaders not only coordinate the efforts of the group towards the accomplishment of the common goal, but also foster the feeling of empathy which enhances group cohesiveness. Students perceived that in addition to directing the group towards the accomplishment of the task, challenging opinions and suggestions, a leader has to be cooperative in nature and encourage mutual understanding and support. In addition, some students noted that two or more students having an individual style of learning and leadership skills threaten the cohesiveness of the group. By stating this reality the students expressed the need for the teacher to determine effective group membership. Does this mean that to determine small group composition effectively teachers have to know their students well? The answer is obviously positive since the extent of the cohesiveness of a cooperative group depends on the quality of interaction of group members; placing encouraging students with more hesitant ones may enhance group cohesiveness, and putting two or more highly persuasive students in a group will probably stir up conflict. In this respect, it seems one strategy might be that teachers not do the grouping of the students at the initial stages of instruction. At these stages students could be given the opportunity to decide on their group membership themselves.

One of the focal points of this study was to identify students' perceptions of the effect of small group learning on learning English. It should be noted that previous research findings have revealed mixed results, especially in reference to the effect of group learning on production accuracy. Whereas some studies found that group work decreases students' correct production (Lightbown & Spanda, 1990; Wong Fillmore, 1992, as cited in Pica, 1994; Chesterfield, Chesterfield, Hayes-Latimer, and Chavez, 1983), others found that group work supported it (Gass & Varonis, 1989; Bruton & Samuda, 1980). In my study only two students perceived that grammar and vocabulary mistakes had to be corrected to achieve production

accuracy. This desire was also reflected in some student suggestions. A few students reported some frustration related to the low language level of their group mates explaining it by the fact that when grouped with students having a low level of language proficiency they felt frustrated by the errors their group mates made. Some other language related issues viewed by students as factors hindering communication in groups were their own or their group mates' inappropriate language skills and poor vocabulary, factors that were viewed by some students to be the cause of communicating in their native tongue during group work.

Other students noted that their group mates would not yield the floor to them, and that the presence of such partners in their group hindered their active involvement in communication. The mentioned difficulties seem to be rooted in the low level of the language proficiency of some students. Some of the perceived difficulties can also be explained by the low level of group cohesiveness, especially those difficulties that referred to turn-taking and unsupportive group mates. Group cohesiveness has been defined as "the strength of relationship linking the members to one another and to the group itself (Forsyth, p.10, 1990). The role of cohesive groups plays a significant role on communication in the classroom. The warm and supportive climate of cohesive groups can create an atmosphere of acceptance and mutual support so that "communication is unfolded and enlivened in positive relationships" (Dörnyei, p. 484, 1997). In the light of the mentioned attitudes and language learning difficulties reported by the students, the role of the teacher in promoting group cohesiveness becomes significant.

This research also revealed students perceptions in relation to the tasks used during the IEP program. Most students favored case studies and debates over group presentations and vocabulary quizzes emphasizing the positive effect of these tasks on their cognitive development and enhancement of their language skills. They also pointed to the consistence of these tasks with CL principles, in this way demonstrating their understanding of the role of CL for their further academic goals. This attitude suggests that more case studies and debates

than other activities can be incorporated into the program. It should be noted, however, that this should be done with a consideration of the linguistic and social conditions in the classroom. It is essential that students have an appropriate level of language skills and adequate level of vocabulary prior to performing such complex tasks as debates and case studies, a fact that was seen by students as essential to their successful accomplishment of communicative group assignments. In relation to social conditions it should be noted that students will perform well on tasks favoring multiple contributions, such as debates and case studies, if they have adequate social skills. According to research done in the L2 field "Discussion and opinion-giving tasks favored participation by more assertive students, often to the point of monologue, and gave little opportunity for other group members to engage in information exchange" (Pica, p.2, 1994). This finding paralleled that of my research in that students saw assertive partners who would not allow them turns to speak as a difficulty towards developing their speaking skills. Therefore, when using debates and case studies it is desirable that students, in addition to appropriate language skills, also have some cooperative learning skills, or that these skills be trained in the classroom prior to, or simultaneously with assigning these group tasks.

Chapter 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

As was mentioned above, the majority of the students perceived their small group learning as a useful experience for the accomplishment of their educational goals. In addition, some students specified the difficulties they encountered in the process of working in groups. A number of them emphasized the role of the students themselves in enhancing the efficiency of small group learning. They expressed the attitude that the success of the group greatly depended on their own performance and stressed that they themselves had to develop their social skills, as well as personal and interpersonal qualities to be able to establish cohesive groups. In addition, some students blamed themselves for their inappropriate language level, which hindered their active involvement in group work stating that they had not used all the opportunities the IEP program offered for the enhancement of their speaking skills and vocabulary development. These attitudes describe our students as mature learners who are open to self criticism and are ready to take the responsibility for their own learning. Responsibility taking is in fact the first step on the way to student autonomy. One of the goals of implementing small group learning in the IEP program has been the promotion of learner autonomy. The small group learning format allows students to evaluate group processes and make decisions about their own performance in the group, encourages students' involvement in the selection of themes and preparation of activities.

Though students themselves have a significant role to play in the success of small group learning, teachers also can facilitate cooperative learning by creating an atmosphere that would promote the development of cohesive groups. Especially in countries like Armenia where students for years have been exposed to traditional instruction favoring the lecture based memorization and repetition teaching mode, and, consequently, do not have any experience with cooperative learning, the teacher's role as of the facilitator of learning and especially as of one who can promote a paradigm shift becomes prominent. The following

recommendations, shaped in the light of the findings of this research, and with the consideration of the difficulties students perceived in the process of small group learning, aim at helping teachers to address the needs and some general concerns of IEP students related to cooperative learning. These recommendations are based on a number of general principles of cooperative learning pedagogy and therefore are appropriate for other cooperative academic environments as well.

1. *Facilitate the development of students' social skills.*

Some difficulties students perceived in relation to small group learning seem to be rooted in the level of students' social skills. For teachers to encourage cooperation, mutual support, and the feeling of belonging to a team may not be sufficient for students to successfully accomplish the goals of cooperative learning. According to Johnson & Johnson "We are not born instinctively knowing how to interact effectively with others. Interpersonal and group skills do not magically appear when they are needed (Johnson & Johnson, p. 122, 1995, as cited in Dörnyei, p. 484, 1997). Therefore it would be useful to reinforce these skills by integrating social skills training in teaching. A way of integrating the training of social skills into everyday classroom routines can be, for instance, assigning students to write their reflections about the difficulties they have perceived in relation to cooperative learning, display some comments summarizing students' general concerns on the blackboard, and invite groups to discuss them. This would help the students not only to see the roots of the perceived difficulties, but also to find effective ways for overcoming them. Classroom recommendations on teaching social skills have been offered by Cohen, 1994; Ehrmann & Dörnyei in press, as cited in Dörnyei, 1997).

It should be mentioned that that the finding that Armenian learners have social styles of learning does not in any way contradict the assumption that social skills need to be taught in our IEP classrooms where the majority of the learners are Armenians. Having social styles of

learning defines student preference for small group learning rather than independent learning formats, but does not ensure that students with social styles of learning will know how to interact effectively with peers, build mutual trust, or manage conflicts in groups.

2. Evaluate students based on individual and group grades.

The IEP evaluation form is designed so as to reflect the student's individual performance. Group grades are not included. This type of evaluation form has been designed in response to the aim of the program to provide data to the admission's committee about individual students' overall performance to make appropriate admittance decisions. However, since group learning is being widely used in the program for its relevance to the academic goals of the university content courses where the grades for group projects and group presentations make up a part of the individual grade, it seems including group grades in the IEP evaluation form would psychologically prepare students for this new experience decreasing the anxiety students may feel with respect to group grades in content courses. Informal evaluation forms reflecting not only individual, but also group grades can also be designed by individual teachers to promote student responsibility for the group. Teachers who would be willing to use such forms should consider two factors. First, giving group grades necessitates permanent grouping. Working within the frame of the same group for a longer time students would develop group affiliation and strategies to work together. Second, being given group grades may be stressful for some students who may feel their contributions remained unnoticed by the teacher. To minimize anxiety and ensure the quality and amount of individual contributions, it would be useful to make the students responsible for a part of the team's task and calculate the grade given for individual work so as to make it a part of the group grade.

3. Provide consistent feedback not only to individual students, but also to the groups about their academic achievements and team building skills.

This can be done immediately after the groups present their work, and summatively, in case of permanent grouping. For such feedback special informal evaluation forms can be used. Teachers can themselves design such forms, or adapt the existing ones to match their concrete classroom situations and academic objectives. This type of feedback would allow the individual students and the groups to be aware of their achievements in terms of working cooperatively in small groups, and would specify the areas that still need improvements.

4. Encourage students' involvement in the evaluation process of small group learning.

This can be done using assessment forms allowing students to evaluate their own performance in the frame of group learning, and the performance of the group with which they worked. This would allow students to see their personal gains and failures when working with a small group, and help them to make decisions about their own functioning in the group (For such assessment forms see Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment, 1992; Kinchella, p.238, 1995). In addition, evaluation forms can be designed aimed at the assessment of the group's functioning rather than that of the individuals in a group. This would help students conceptualize the group as a cohesive whole and would foster the feeling of group membership. These self evaluations can be discussed with the teacher in a non-threatening environment. This would promote a meaningful negotiation between the teacher and the students and would add value to student judgments about their own functioning within a small group.

5. Monitor the work of the groups while they are in the process of working on the assignment.

To help students successfully accomplish group tasks it is desirable that teachers, especially at the initial stages of using small group instruction, take an active facilitative role. Students coming from traditional teacher-centered systems in which all the decisions are made by the teacher may need time and effort to take increased responsibilities for their own

learning. In this situation teacher guidance and support becomes essential for student success. With respect to IEP instruction some students mentioned that their peers spoke Armenian, did not share the responsibility for the group, ascribed the leader role to themselves, etc. These negative factors inherent in group learning can be considerably minimized if appropriate guidance is provided by the teacher. A way of doing this is for the teacher to circulate in the classroom when group work is in progress and give on the spot feedback. This can also be done by taping the groups while they are working on the assignment, then the teacher randomly selects one of the tapes for whole class listening and discussion inviting the students to indicate the positive aspects of the process of the group's work and to make suggestions that could have made the work of that particular group more effective. Depending on the specifics of their classrooms and teaching objectives, teachers can think of different techniques for the promotion of group learning in the classroom.

Chapter 7. CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of small group work in the IEP program, AUA has a dual purpose -- to aid communication in the classroom and to prepare students for a Western style academic environment in which students are expected to work collaboratively in the small group format. Since IEP students come from traditional teacher-centered classrooms and most of them do not have prior experience with working in small groups, it was expected that the new learning format would pose some problems for the learners. This study showed that the students did not perceive major problems related to this learning format. The vast majority of the students perceived small group learning useful for their academic goals and reported only some minor difficulties related to their group learning experience. In their comments the students emphasized the positive effect of small group learning on their motivation to learn, cognitive development, enhancement of their social skills, psychological health, as well as the development of their speaking skills. Though the students emphasized the favorable effect of group learning on the enhancement of their social skills, the difficulties they perceived mostly referred to the social aspect of group learning, namely to the inappropriate interpersonal skills of their peers.

Some students also perceived a few minor difficulties related to the way communication evolved within the groups in terms of their group mates' or their own linguistic preparedness for complex communicative tasks, and code-switching to their native tongue, which the students attributed to the inability to monitor their own learning. It should be noted however that only a small number of students mentioned these difficulties, which suggests that these problems are student specific rather than course specific. The great spread of responses that was observed in respect to the suggestions students made for the improvement of the program also implies that the reported needs and expectations were very person specific. To identify and respond to these needs it would be useful if teachers

encourage feedback from the class they teach. The identification of these needs and the systematic analyses of the functioning of the small groups would help them to facilitate the development of the necessary conditions for cooperative learning.

As mentioned, the unique environment of AUA and the limited number of participants do not allow the generalizing of the results of this research to other Armenian undergraduate and graduate schools. This study focused on data from two classes only. Though the majority of students prior to being grouped in these classes had taken classes from several teachers which minimizes the effect of teacher related variables on student responses, further research involving a greater number of classes is needed. This type of research would allow a cross-class analysis to identify the differences between classes, and the influence of various teaching styles on student perceptions of small group learning. The involvement of a larger student population would also help to define the differences between the perceptions of higher level and lower level students. This type of cross-class and cross-level analyses would provide deeper insights for understanding the dynamics of small group learning in IEP classes, and would help to make value judgments about how small group learning can be enhanced.

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Appendix

Dear students, the purpose of this questionnaire is to find out your attitudes about some aspects of the teaching methodology in IEP. Your detailed answers will help us to improve the teaching at our program.

You can provide your answers in English, Armenian, or Russian.

Thank you for your cooperation.

If the provided space is not enough, please use the back of the paper. Don't forget to indicate the number of the question.

Questionnaire

1. What you think the purpose of doing small group work in IEP classes is?

2. From the provided options put a check () next to the activities that you completed in EGAP/ESP either in pairs or in small groups:

- a) vocabulary quiz
- b) reading quiz
- c) making an outline using notes from listening
- d) group presentations
- e) case studies
- f) debates
- g) other Please specify.

Please state which of the above mentioned group or pair activities you found *most helpful* and explain why.

3. Put a check next to the option that best describes the usefulness of small group work for you *in terms of learning English*.

- a) very useful
- b) useful
- c) not useful
- d) uncertain

Please explain your choice.

4. Put a check next to the option that best describes the usefulness of small group work for you *in terms of accomplishing an assignment*.

- a) very useful
- b) useful
- c) not useful
- d) uncertain

Please explain your choice.

5. Put a check next to the option that best describes the usefulness of small group work for you *in terms of developing social skills, i.e., enhancing the ability to interact smoothly with others*.

- a) very useful
- b) useful
- c) not useful
- d) uncertain

Please explain your choice.

6. What *difficulties* did you encounter when doing small group work in the areas listed below?

a) learning English

b) accomplishing an assignment

c) interacting with other group members

d) other

7. To what extent is the *atmosphere* within a small group important to you?

- a) very important
- b) somewhat important
- c) not important
- d) uncertain

Please explain.

8. How does the *atmosphere* within a small group affect your *performance*?

- a) very much
- b) somewhat
- c) a little
- d) not at all

Please explain.

9. Put a check next to how you prefer to work *in general* in the classroom.

- a) with a small group
- b) with a single partner
- c) by myself
- d) other Please specify.

Explain your choice please.

10. Please in the provided space write your suggestions about how small group work can be improved in IEP. *If the space is not enough, use the back of the paper.*
