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## **ABSTRACT**

Due to the fact that many teachers nowadays face the problem of teaching large classes without having enough resources, we decided to do a research to help this weakness in our education. In our research, we tried to gather some ideas to make a collection of activities using flashcards, songs, and games that could be applied in large classes which have little resources. First, we did an investigation about the theory on which our work was based. We researched about teaching children, teaching vocabulary, and managing large classes. Second, we carried out a field research. We interviewed an expert and applied a survey to students from seventh grade from a “fiscomisional” elementary school of Cuenca. The ideas, product of the literature review and the field research, were used to gather activities to practice vocabulary with large groups. As a conclusion, we can say that this topic was viable since we got all the information to proof that is it possible to practice vocabulary with large classes using the appropriate techniques and resources.

Key words: practice, vocabulary, children, large, classes, elementary, school, problems, motivation, activities.



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## **UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA**

**FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA, LETRAS Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN**

**CARRERA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA**

“How to Practice Vocabulary with Large Classes in Elementary School”

**Tesina previa a la obtención del Título de Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación en la Especialización de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa.**

**Tutor:** Dr. Fabián Rodas

**Autores:** Elizabeth Tatiana Argudo Matute

Diego Leonardo Avendaño Saquisilí





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## **AUTHORSHIP**

The ideas, thoughts, and comments stipulated in this investigative work are the exclusive responsibility of its authors, Tatiana Argudo and Diego Avendaño.

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this work to my family, especially to my parents. My parents provided me with everything I needed from the time I was born; that is why I could succeed throughout my career and make my dreams come true. I love you all.

Diego

To my mother, Silvia Matute, who has always supported me to continue my education. I would like to dedicate this work to her because she has helped me since the beginning of my career, and she has raised me to be the woman that I am today .

Tatiana



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Practicing vocabulary in an English class is of great significance since words convey most of the meaning of what we want to express. In fact, it is important the introduction of English words to young kids in order to provide a foundation that later will be used in the learning of rules and structures. Also, it would be ideal to get students interested in learning English vocabulary, even if we are dealing with a large class. Thus, the following research work will be oriented towards the creation of a booklet of fun activities to practice vocabulary with large groups of young students.

Why do we mention large groups? We do it because in Ecuador it is a fact that most schools have classrooms of 30 students or more. We think that this number of pupils is too high to teach them English since there are some problems that large classes have to face regarding discipline, learning effectiveness, individual attention, etc.

What is more, it is somewhat challenging if we are teaching children since they get bored easily and they like to be active most of the time. For this reason, we have directed our research toward children in order to make our English classes fit the children's characteristics. Consequently, in this research we will analyze how to generate motivation in kids, proposing a booklet of activities.



## CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM

### 1.1 Topic

“How to Practice Vocabulary with Large Classes

In Elementary School”

We wanted to get involved in a research for activities using flashcards, songs, and games, which could be used in a class of 30 students or more; taking into account that neither the student nor the teacher is able to bring expensive materials into class.

This research will help us improve the way we teach vocabulary in our classes. We also hope that this investigative work will be useful for many teachers who face the problem of working with large classes and scarce resources.

### 1.2 Description of the problem

When we teachers were trained to teach English, we learned a set of good ideas to apply in our classes. After we left the University, we got ready to get a job as an English teacher. And by the time we got a job, we were shocked because most of the activities we learned in the past are somewhat useless since we have to face the fact that many classrooms, especially in public schools, are too crowded and they lack resources. As a result, we got somewhat frustrated, trying to figure out what to do with those limitations.

The previous anecdote is our personal problem and perhaps it is most teachers' problem; therefore, we will try to solve it. We want to research and design activities to practice vocabulary with a high number of students in a class, without using many resources. We also want to help teachers find ideas to solve this problem, as well.

We will focus on elementary schools because we both teach children. We are planning to look for activities that use songs, games, and flashcards. We do not want to provide theory, but rather we want to provide practical



ideas. We will present activities that will be the product of our research and some that might come out from ourselves.

### 1.3 Justification

There are many ways to practice vocabulary, but can we do it if we are managing a class of 30 students or more? We have chosen this topic because this question is somewhat difficult to answer. If we are dealing with small classes, with a few students, then we can get lots of good results when practicing vocabulary. On the other hand, what happens if we are teaching a large class? Will it be possible to teach them without having to design expensive material for each student? These are some of the questions we want to research throughout this investigative work.

In Ecuador, most public elementary schools have an average of 30 students per classroom. This can be a high number if we want to teach them English, partly because of the quantity of learners, and partly because of the lack of resources a teacher handles. And here, we do not want to emphasize on the quantity, but on the lack of resources.

Although the government of Ecuador has been investing in education, we can still notice that there are a big number of schools that lack resources. This forces us, English teachers, to instruct our children in a large classroom without the necessary materials. So, this is the problem we desire to solve. We want to search for ways that a teacher can teach his/her students without using many materials. We hope to find out some ways to practice vocabulary with large classes since so far, it is complicated the idea of reducing the number of students.

Every time we surf the net or open a book looking for activities, we get really excited. There are plenty of materials to make our English class really fun. Unfortunately, most of them require a lot of materials that neither the school nor we can provide. And then we have to look for another activity. This situation makes us always think, "I wish there were a website or a book designed for large classes without using many resources!"



All the reasons explained above gave us a good idea. We plan to make a collection of fun activities that use flashcards, games, and songs and that could be used in class without the necessity of printing a lot of sheets or designing expensive material for each student. However, as teachers, we will always have to design didactic material, but for the class as a whole.

Developing this topic will help us improve our English classes and make them fun. And we also expect many teachers will find it useful for them, too.

## **1.4 Objectives**

### **General Objective:**

To research and collect activities to practice vocabulary with large classes without using many resources in an elementary school.

### **Specific Objectives**

- To research about the main problems with large classes.
- To provide ideas to work with large classes.
- To find some strategies to practice vocabulary with large classes.
- To provide ideas for teachers who face the problem of large classes and scarce resources.
- To make a collection of activities using flashcards, songs, and games to practice vocabulary.



## CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the following section, the literature review will be presented. It will include scientific material which will be of great significance as the foundation for our research work **“How to Practice Vocabulary with large Classes in Elementary School.”** Every topic discussed refers to foreign language learning as well as Problems with Large classes, Classroom Management, and Vocabulary Practice, directed towards school children. The first topic analyzed is Foreign Language Learning.

### 2.1 Foreign Language Learning

Barry McLaughlin states, “Foreign language learning typically refers to the situation in which children from majority-language backgrounds learn a second language as a subject matter- for example, English –speaking American children learning French, or German children learning English in the classroom” (10). On the other hand, is it important to learn another language? In order to explain the importance of learning a second language, McLaughlin presents an anecdote from his own experience:

“One of my children brought home from school the story of the mother mouse who saved her young from a ferocious cat by barking. ‘Bow, wow.’ After the cat ran away in terror, the mother mouse said to her offspring, ‘See children, it pays to know a second language’”(IX).

The previous short story explains the advantages of speaking a new language. Why do students need to learn a foreign language? According to the California Department of Education, students need to learn a foreign language in order to succeed in their educational studies and in their lives. In fact, individuals who speak a second language will acquire knowledge and reasoning which can be only obtained by learning a specific language. For example, a student of music, who speaks English from birth and knows Italian, is able to understand the main operas from the nineteenth century. In the same manner, a person studying science and who knows German can interact with scientists of different areas. Likewise, the student of Chinese will





not have a hard time trying to understand Globalization since he/she knows a language from the business world. As a conclusion, favorable conditions and advantages will accompany the student of a foreign language (11).

Which foreign language is the most suitable to learn? According to Michael Dragsten, English is the language that is commonly preferred since it is learned throughout the world and employed in contexts of great importance. For example, people make use of English in international relations, business, politics, education, tourism, science, and technology. For these reasons, it is said that English is a currently Global Language (1).

The next topic will include some ideas for teaching vocabulary. It is of great significance to have information on this topic to plan activities to practice in class.

## 2.2 Teaching Vocabulary

Should vocabulary be emphasized in class over grammar? The answer is yes, according to McCarten who quotes Wilkins, "... without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (20). This explains perfectly the importance of teaching vocabulary since words play an important role when expressing ideas. McCarten also explains that an important learning experience is to instruct students on how to ask for words they do not know. She mentions, "...phrases like "What's the word for \_\_\_ in English?" "How do you say \_\_\_ ?," and "What does \_\_\_ mean?" are useful to teach at the basic levels." Moreover, teachers should make students realize what words are important to learn, what a word is (eg. meaning, written form), and why those words are important (20).

Some researchers disagree on the methods to teach vocabulary, but, surprisingly, most of them agree on the fact that repetition is a great help to learn words. And on this topic, MacCarten quotes Sokmen, "...repetition is an important aid to learning and ...having to actively recall or 'retrieve' a word is a more effective way of learning than simple exposure or just seeing a word over and over"(21). The previous thought clarifies that repetition is not taking word by word and making the student say them again and again, but rather, it Tatiana Argudo & Diego Avendaño



is to make the student remember words through activities. On the other hand, a mechanical repetition has proved to be successful in students, as MacCarten says, “Researchers also agree that repeating words aloud helps students remember words better than repeating them silently” (21).

MacCarten claims that pupils should not be taught large lists of words. There is a specific amount regarding how many words a student can acquire on a single lesson, and this amount has to do directly with the level of difficulty of words. Whenever students find some group of words hard to learn, the teacher should encourage them to select the words they need to comprehend according to their needs (23).

MacCarten also quotes Tomlinson who presents some advice for teachers regarding the production of resources. The first piece of advice is that materials should have a strong and immediate effect on students. Indeed, rare and interesting topics, engaging lessons, and diversity are some characteristics that teaching materials should have. Other recommendation is that words should be taught by using images, music, and distinct pieces of writing, such as stories, websites, questionnaires, and news reports. In fact, all of these resources have a great significance for the students’ purposes. In the same manner, all these teaching aids should exhibit different characteristics and involve students of all ages (20-21).

One additional issue that MacCarten explains regarding vocabulary-teaching is whether to teach active or passive vocabulary. Active vocabulary refers to the words students generally speak and write; whereas, passive vocabulary is related to the words they only know and identify. The fact that most students are able to understand words rather than utter them provides some clues for teachers to plan activities. Therefore, people who educate must impart knowledge of both types of vocabulary: active vocabulary to produce language and passive vocabulary to grasp the meaning of words. And as a conclusion, the author expresses that active vocabulary should be always emphasized on activities and tests (19).



Teaching vocabulary can become a complex and perplex issue, but it is essential for foreign language learning as Igbaria states, “Vocabulary is needed for expressing meaning and in using the receptive (listening and reading) and the productive (speaking and writing) skills. ‘If language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh’ ” ( par. 2).

Juříčková states, “the biggest component of any language course is vocabulary. No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of a foreign language are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in a foreign language just cannot happen in any meaningful way”(9).

Igbaria claims that vocabulary could not be taught as a list of isolated words that learners have to just remember and write on papers mechanically. On the contrary, students have to recognize the variety of meanings and uses of words in different contexts and how they work together. Therefore, educators have to choose the correct vocabulary and use the appropriate techniques (par.6).

According to Pinkley, children have to begin learning single words (nouns and verbs) within a context or category which is important in the children’s world. For example, teacher presents words related to “the classroom” such as pen, pencil, eraser, and book. Then students can acquire different multi-words or word combinations such as adjective + noun ( big pencil), noun+ noun (ice cream), verb + noun (get up) and verb + preposition + noun (turn off the radio)(5).

Pinkley divides vocabulary strategies in the following way:

Cognitive strategies include making word lists; verbal and written repetition; labeling real objects with English equivalents; and keeping a vocabulary notebook.

Metacognitive strategies include working with English songs, chants, poems, movies, and newspapers; self-testing; and using spaced word practice.



Memory strategies include relating new material to previous knowledge; personalization; visualization; vocalizing; and using physical movement (5).

About techniques to teach vocabulary, Uberman evaluates the main traditional ones in relation to usefulness in vocabulary presentation. One of the traditional techniques is “Visual techniques” which helps students on vocabulary retention. The author says, “They [visual techniques] help students associate presented material in a meaningful way and incorporate it into their system of language values” (par. 6). Other important technique is Verbal Explanation which consists of giving a definition to students, and in this technique, students do not need to do any effort. Finally, a third technique is the use of dictionaries, in which students look for the meaning of unfamiliar words (par. 6-7).

The following topic that will be exposed is teaching children because this thesis deals with elementary school students.

### **2.3 Teaching Children**

Teaching children a second language and choosing the appropriate methods could be complicated. Scott and Ytrebeg give some general characteristics of children. First, they divide children in two important categories: from five to seven years old and from eight to ten years old; these ages are crucial to learn a foreign language. Then Scott and Ytrebeg state that young learners have a short attention span, love playing, and are enthusiastic. Moreover, kids have their own world, and most of the time they do not understand adults’ or parents’ world. In fact, they cannot make a difference between what is real and what is fiction. Finally, Scott and Ytrebeg say that children learn by using their senses such as ear, hands, and eyes (2-5).

According to Rixon, the best way to teach English to children is through activities in which they find play and joy, such as “singing, clapping hands, chanting, rhymes, solving puzzles, drawing, coloring, model-making games.” It is well known that children learn if they are motivated with fun activities, but



the author tells teachers that they have to avoid fun activities which are pointless and time consuming regarding English learning (33).

Rixon also explains which activities have worked for her when she used to teach children in Italy. Some games like “What’s the time Mr. Wolf,” or “I went to the market and I bought...” have been a success in her classes because these games make the students practice and become happy. Also, she talks about how songs help students memorize some words in an easy way. For instance, we have the song “if you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands,” in which children learn commands by doing the actions. Another example of motivating activities is stories. There are some stories which are popular around the world, and teachers can take advantage of it because if a child is already familiar with the story in his/her native language, then it will be easier to teach the English version. Another important thing is to choose stories which include a lot of movements and actions so that children are active and not bored (35-37).

Vosniadou writes “social participation is the main activity through which learning occurs”, and also she cites Lev Vygotsky, “the way children learn is by internalizing the activities, habits, vocabulary and ideas of the members of the community in which they grow up.” Students work hard to improve the quality of their products (essays, projects, artwork, etc.) when they know that they will be shared with other students. Therefore, teachers have to create an atmosphere to encourage young learners to participate actively. Vosniadou adds some activities which are helpful, such as projects, crafts, experiments, discussions, and also she claims, “avoid situations where the students are passive listeners”(8-9).

Motivation plays an important role in kid’s learning as Vosniadou affirms, “Motivated learners are easy to recognize because they have a passion for achieving their goals and are ready to expose a great deal of effort. They also show considerable determination and persistence. This influences the amount and quality of what is learned” (27).



According to some psychologists, there are two kinds of motivation: extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. In extrinsic motivation, teachers use recompenses to encourage students' participation in class. These recompenses might be praise, high grades, awards, money, or food. On the other hand, in intrinsic motivation, children do not need prizes; they just participate by their own wish as Vosniadou emphasizes, "An important characteristic of intrinsically motivated learners is their belief that effort is important for success" (27).

MacCarten says that it is clear that games are motivating for children. Even if children are not motivated to learn English outside the classroom, we, teachers, can stimulate them inside the classroom by using games. As a result, children will get engaged and will be motivated to learn obtaining the best outcomes, as the author says, "Children have to be actively involved in whatever they do in order to succeed in learning" (144).

When dealing with games, teachers have to consider some ludic principles. The first principle is "luck." Children love games in which luck is involved because it makes them more motivated in playing. The second ludic principle is "competition and cooperation." Children love to play games to win, and it is good when in a game they have to interact in order to succeed. The third ludic principle is "uncertainty." We have some memory games which fit into this category, like "Grandmother went to market." With these three ludic principles, a teacher can turn any book into a set of encouraging games (148).

In conclusion, children love playing games which motivate them to use English. Teachers have to create activities taking into account the kind of game that will be used, the organization of the classroom, the ludic principles, and the resources and material needed. The best way to turn the classroom into a motivating environment is doing what children love most, fun games. Moreover, teachers have to create an excellent environment where kids develop their language in a meaningful and practical way, according to their characteristics and interacting with others.



Managing a large class is not an easy issue, and for this reason, it is important to research on the topic of classroom management

## **2.4 Classroom Management**

Most students from public schools have been called “disenchanted, disaffected, disaffiliated, disturbed and disruptive.” However, the contexts where they come from have been ignored. The majority of these kids are influenced by some problems that surround them, and this has affected their school success. Some of the problems mentioned by Christopher Dunbar are “the family’s loss of meaningful employment, the infestation of illegal drugs, and an increase in single-parent households” (1). Dunbar also claims that in most cases, children are not being raised by their parents but by other person who in many cases does not have a close relationship with them (1).

Dunbar also explains that behavior problems appear inside the classroom since students have to live through the tough conditions stated above. It is necessary to analyze children’s difficult situations because this might explain in part their misbehavior inside the classroom. In fact, by means of a bad behavior, children convey their necessities and concerns. Furthermore, Dunbar claims that it is important to solve any problems because in the future, a bad behavior in youth can lead to a serious antisocial problem (1).

According to Oliver and Reschly, it is important to have a suitable control and arrangement of the class to provide a positive environment for learning. Having a favorable classroom management does not mean that all the students will succeed in learning, but rather, it means that the students will have the appropriate surrounding to acquire knowledge (1).

Obtaining the command of the classroom is crucial to instruct children. Sometimes teachers, especially those who are beginning their profession, find it somewhat challenging to correct discipline, and this problem has kept them from succeeding in teaching. It is a serious matter to gain control of a class since it can cause some teachers to feel stressed out and exhausted.



That is why, in the end, some teachers decide to quit their profession (Oliver and Reschly 1).

To avoid any discipline problems, Clare Lavery suggests that from the first day of class, teachers have to be confident and avoid nervousness. They have to convince students that they are teachers who are well prepared and capable of teaching. The first days of class are a period of time in which a teacher has to gain the control of the class. Then once he/she has attained this, it will be time to be friendly and make the students start to like him/her (14).

In order to keep a class organized or to devise any plans, teachers should create a set of rules and routines, claim Oliver and Reschly. Rules help students moderate their actions inside the classroom. They remind students of both the actions allowed and punished, and also the results of those actions. One important fact is that rules should be stated in a positive way. The students should know what the intended behavior is rather than the behavior that will be penalized. Also, rules should be written in simple language and be in a small amount so that students can keep track of them. As for routines, it is claimed that they help to maintain order with the minimum use of resources, time, and effort. To sum up, teachers should instruct the students on the routines and rules constantly and have to look for ways to remind them every time a problem is likely to occur (10).

In many cases, teachers do not know how to react whenever a problem occurs inside the classroom, so Clare Lavery provides the following list of common classroom bad behavior and its solutions (22).

- A pair of students start talking. The teacher should pose a question to any of the students who are talking to call their attention. Also, it is better if the teacher approaches the students keeping eye contact but in a concealed way. If this does not work, a final suggestion is to move the students to other chairs.
- Students stop listening because everybody in the class is chatting. It is recommended not to shout aloud to get their attention, but the teacher





should call the students attention by making a sound with his/her hands or with some object like the ruler.

- A student does not want to perform an activity. Procure that the student be in charge of another task. For instance, the student can be a secretary of a group or tape conversations if working orally.
- A student yells at the teacher. Keep calm and manage to get the student apart to talk to him.

The next topic analyzed is problems with large classes. It is said that large groups are more difficult to control; that is why, the main problems with large classes will be studied.

## 2.5 Problems with Large Classes

How to instruct large classes is a problem that some teachers find difficult to solve, state Lindsay Clandfield and Adrian Tennant. The approach that is often used is standing in front of the class and giving an oral presentation. However, this is not recommendable since the students do not have enough chances to work with the language. The previous limitations lead teachers to think that large classes present undesirable problems. On the other hand, Canfield and Tennant claim that there are some beneficial aspects of large classes. It does not matter if a class has 100 students because this high number will make the classes more active; that is to say, there will be cooperative learning and interaction to exchange ideas (par. 1).

As for the difficulties in teaching large classes, David Hayes attempts to provide some solutions by exposing his own experience in Thailand. He claims that although most teachers are well trained in teaching, they are shocked when they are dealing with large classes since there are some new problems to solve (106).

Hayes exposes some problems based on a research by the International Network for Class Size Studies (INCLASS). The first problem a teacher has to face is discomfort. There is not enough room for class interaction, as it is explained by a clarifying experience of a teacher:



“The students can't move easily and some students don't do the activities. I must speak very loud and make me sore throat. There's not enough room (space) to do the activity—overcrowded. Large size of class makes me very frustrated and tired and I feel hopeless to manage the class successfully” (Hayes, 109).

The solution for this problem is the arrangement of the class in groups according to our needs. The second problem described is control. Large classes make it harder to discipline students since some students began to talk making the class noisy. The solution is to find activities that keep students silent. The author advises that the teacher should not shout to get attention, but rather he/she should employ some other ways to let the students know that they have to be attentive. The third problem is individual attention. A teacher cannot help every student in the class but some of them. In fact, it makes him/her very disappointed. The solution is to memorize the names of each student so that they feel more comfortable to learn English. As an aid, the students might be asked to make a name card. And here Hayes claims that not all students need individual attention in every class. Teachers should make a quick check to see if the students are doing things correctly and focus on the students that need extra help. The fourth problem is learning effectiveness. The teacher cannot keep track of every student, and he is not able to know for sure who is learning and who is not. The solution is to make an action plan to apply in the future. As a conclusion, Hayes states that nearly all teachers do not like large groups, but it not impossible to teach them. Then he concludes with his own piece of advice,

“If you have to teach in large classes, the first important thing you have to do is finding some students who can help you. This is a good thing because these students can practice more and they can help you. They will like English and often we'll get some important information from them. And the students will tell you what they want to learn more, what games are boring, what games are interesting, what thing you should adapt. Try it. It really works” (108-115 Hayes).

## **2.6 Previous Studies**

It is necessary to compare researches concluded by authors on the topics dealt with in order to examine similarities and differences and establish a conclusion. The following researches were done in China over the issue of



large classes. As it is known, China is an overpopulated country, and it is not surprising that classrooms are crowded there.

### 2.6.1 Study at Wen Tzao College

The first study is done by Wu Hsiao Li, who carries out his research at Wen Tzao Ursuline Junior College of Modern Languages. It is a college of 60 classrooms with 52 learners in each one. Hsiao utters that teachers from this college had been directing their activities to overcome the problems inside a classroom with a lot of students, and they had come to an agreement that the problems with large classes would end by reducing the number of students per class. On the other hand, it was not possible to reduce the number of students, partly because of the policies from the Chinese Ministry of Education, and partly because of the economic status of the college. As a result of this, based on the Chinese proverb “where there is a will, there is a way”, the author analyses some problems and then he tries to provide some theory to help the cause (89).

The principal difficulties encountered in Wen Tzao College are pedagogical, management-related, and affective. First, as for pedagogical difficulties, Hsiao expresses that monitoring and feedback cannot be accomplished completely. There is a lack of time to pay attention to students individually, and it is impossible to engage the students in activities to promote interaction. The second difficulty is related to management. Teachers are not able to control the behavior of all the students, and they cannot focus their attention on each student. Moreover, checking homework or assignments is another somewhat challenging task in a large class. In third place, affective difficulties are mentioned. Teachers find it hard either to memorize students’ names, or satisfy all the students’ requirements. As a consequence teachers feel incapable of creating a suitable relationship with the students (92).

### 2.6.2 Teaching EFL Large Classes in China

In China, large classes are a result of lack of teachers and resources, state Wang Qiang and Zhang Ning. It is very common to find classes of 50



students in elementary and high schools; whereas in institutes of higher learning, classes have an average of 100 students. Apparently, teachers in China have to deal with the problems of large classes (1).

There is not an exact number for a class to be considered large, but it depends on how a teacher perceives the surrounding context. For instance, in some private schools a number of 20 students might be considered excessive. Also, Lancaster University project conceives a large class as having 50 students. Generally, in China, a large class has an average of 50-100 students (Qiang and Ning 1).

In the study of large classes in China, Qiang and Ning describe some problems that teachers have to face when teaching. The first problem exposed is discipline. Teachers feel unable to control all the students who misbehave. Second, teachers are not able to please the whole class since all the students are different. They do not share the same tastes, mood, and abilities. Third, there is a lack of time and room. This keeps the teachers from organizing the class efficiently. As a fourth aspect, students do not have the same opportunities to interact inside the classroom. Finally and fifth point, teachers have some problems providing feedback and assessing students (3).

On the other hand, Qiang and Ning emphasize that large classes are not negative at all, and they quote Ur and Hess who state that “large classes can provide richer human resources and greater opportunities for creativity than smaller classes” (3).

Next, the authors expose the principles and strategies used by teachers to teach large classes in China. In order to solve the problem of affection, teachers use some approaches like knowing and establishing communication with students. In this way, they are able to establish a good relationship and to know what students like or worry about. To deal with the problem of control, teachers establish a set of rules and group students according to what is needed in the class. For instance, some groups are formed according to abilities or likes. Lastly, to overcome pedagogical problems, teachers plan



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lessons focused on the students, making sure they provide situations in which the students can have the same opportunities to participate and learn (Qiang and Ning 5).



## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Basic Methodology

In order to carry out this research, we were based on a literary research, focused on books and articles.

We analyzed articles, journals, and other pieces of writing in which some authors expose their ideas on the topics we are interested in.

The main techniques that guided us to accomplish our research work were intensive reading, examination, analysis, synthesis, summarizing, and observation. All these techniques provided us enough data for the achievement of our research.

We also made a field research. First, we interviewed an expert, trying to take advantage of her experience to enrich our topic. And second, we applied a survey to students from a large class in order to know how they feel being in a large class and what motivates them.

All the methodology described above provided enough data to structure our investigative work.

#### 3.1.1 Literature Review

We have read some books and articles which gave us important information about what a large class is, what important points we need to take into consideration when teaching and practicing vocabulary with large groups, and how to create motivation in children. However, the most important fact is that we found some meaningful and fun activities to practice vocabulary.

#### 3.1.2 Interview

We interviewed Master María Dolores Burbano who is the Director of the Language Department and worked 10 years for CONCELT (Consulting Center for English Language Teaching). She has a lot of experience both as a teacher and as a teacher trainer. Nowadays, she teaches College students,



but some years ago, she used to teach children. The interview consisted of nine questions. The first three questions were designed to obtain information about managing large classes. In question four, five, and six, we wanted to get some points on techniques to apply with large classes. And in the last questions, we asked Ms. Burbano about motivation, in order to find activities which we can use with children (See Appendix 2).

### **3.1.3 Survey**

We applied a questionnaire to 38 students from seventh grade in a “fiscomissional” school which is located in Cuenca. The students’ ages averaged between 10 and 11 years old. This survey was applied with the Director’s authorization. It was written in Spanish and divided in three parts. In part A, we included seven questions in which students were asked about how they feel being part of a large class. In part B, there were also seven questions, and they were designed to know if the students were motivated to learn English and which activities motivate them. Finally, in part C, we provided a list of activities and the students had to circle the activities they would like to have in a English Class. (See Appendix 1)

### **3.1.4 Results and Analysis**

We made a qualitative and quantitative analysis to interpret the results, product of our field research. We tried to organize our data to show statistics and trends.

#### **3.1.4.1 Results and analysis: Interview**

Ms. Burbano provided useful information about managing large classes since she has had to teach them in the past. She expressed that teachers should not complain about the amount of students all the time, but rather they have to face reality. They have to find the methods and techniques to solve their problems. She claimed that one of the best techniques to teach large classes is working in groups, and it is important that the teacher monitors every activity the students do to make sure they are working properly. She



affirms that it is not important the number of students but their motivation. If students are willing to learn English, it will be easier to teach them.

The best approach Ms. Maria Dolores Burbano mentions to practice vocabulary is through visuals. By visuals, she means not only pictures, flash cards, or drawings, but also movies and videos. Visuals are always something good and productive to teach words.

The interviewee also expressed that children are always motivated with hands-on practice. Children have to be active as much as possible during class. If they are passive without doing anything, they will get bored easily. And also, because children have a short attention span, the activities should be changed every ten minutes. If we don't do this, then they will lose concentration. She points out that one activity that has worked for her is role playing. Children love acting out like their mothers or fathers or other people they have contact with.

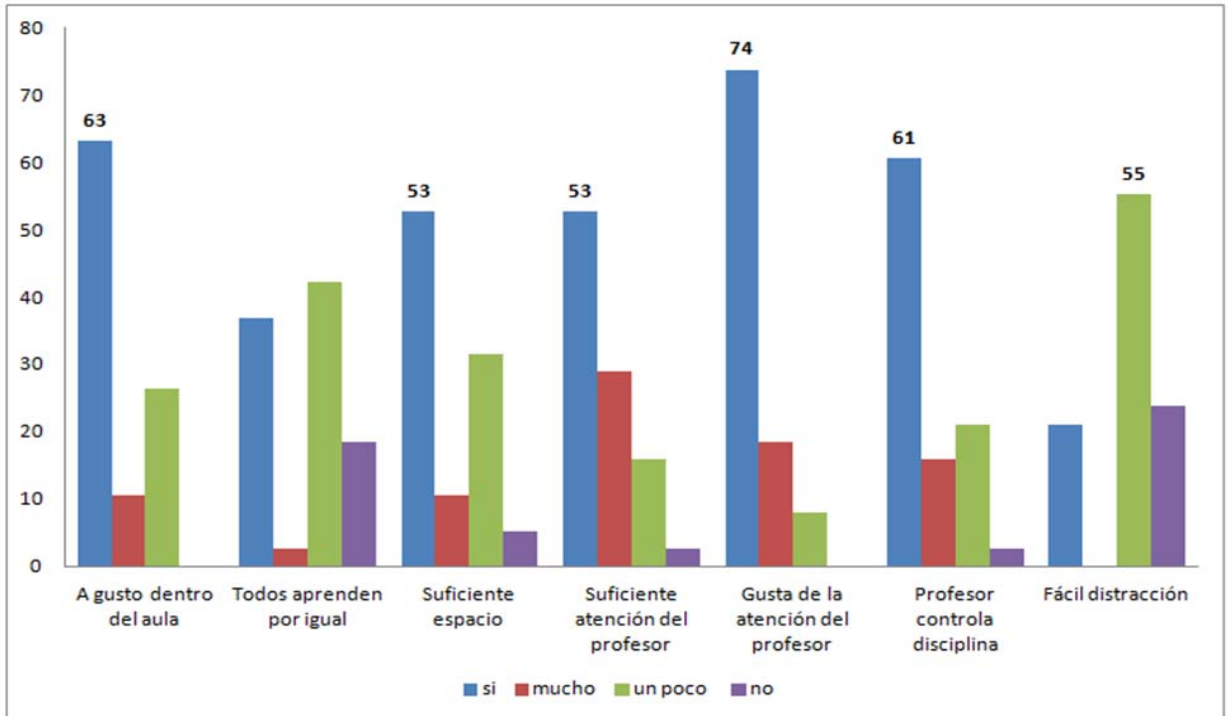
About teaching without having enough resources the interviewee told us that a teacher makes the class and the resources are only a complement. Even if a teacher has all the resources, but he /she doesn't know how to take advantage of them, they will not be useful at all. (See appendix 3)

#### **3.1.4.2 Results and analysis: Survey**

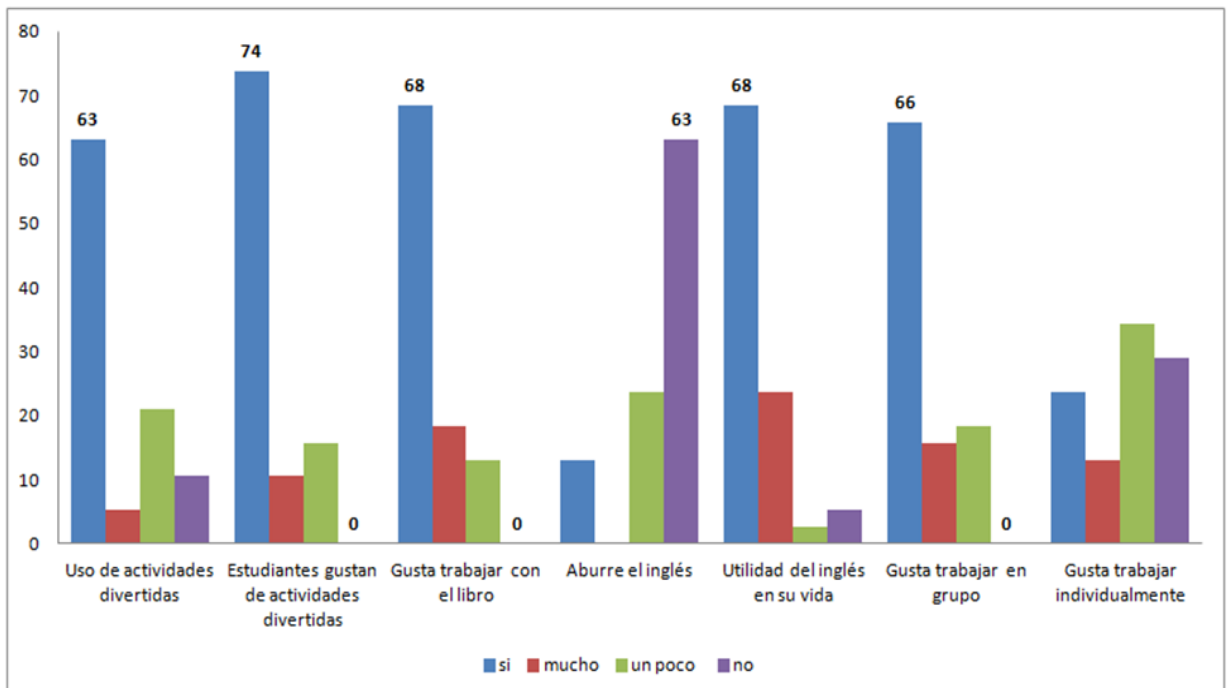
Our questionnaire was designed to obtain information for our research. We considered of great importance to know about the way students felt in a large class, their level of motivation, and what activities they preferred. So, we designed a questionnaire consisting of three parts, one for each point.

In part one, we included seven questions in which students were asked about the way they felt by being part of a large class. The main findings for our research were that 63% of the students felt good inside the English classroom and 74% liked to get teachers' attention. So it is important to find activities where teachers can focus their attention on the students.



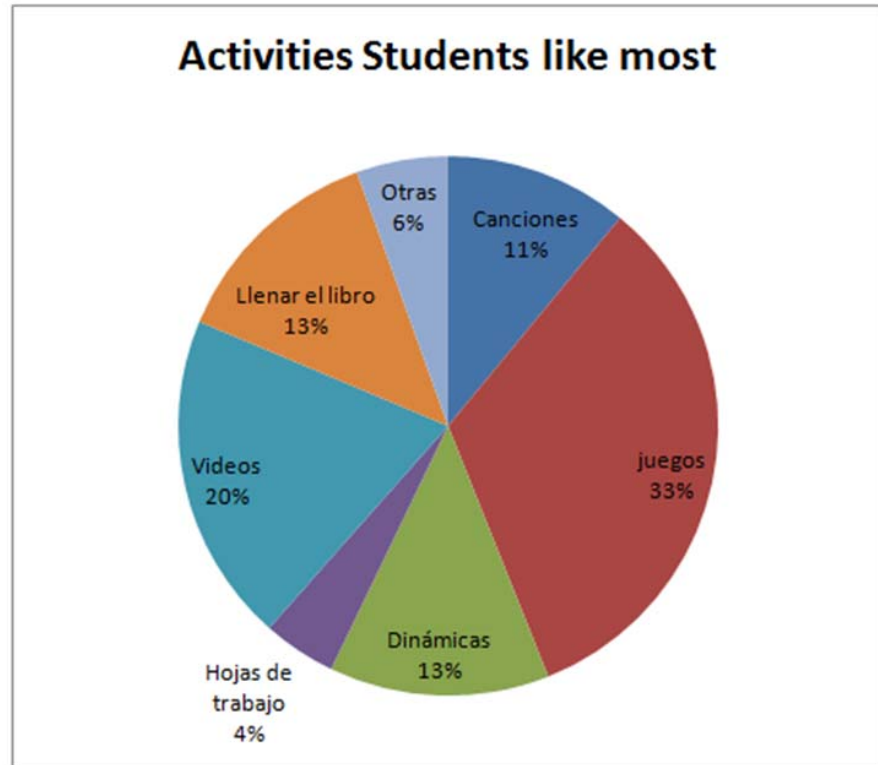


In part two, there were also seven questions. Here, the students answered some questions about motivation. We wanted to know if they were motivated to learn English, and what motivated them. The main finding in this part was that 63% of the students expressed that they were not bored when they learned English; that is to say, they expressed positive feelings towards it. In general, students showed a good attitude towards this language.





Finally, in part three, we provided a list of activities, and the students had to circle the activities they would like to have in an English class. Knowing this helped us research or design activities to practice vocabulary according to the students' interests.





## CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

This research and some previous studies already mentioned in this monographic work have led to some conclusions about practicing vocabulary in large classes.

First, teaching large classes is not impossible. On the contrary, teachers can use some tips in order to do this task easier. One of them is the work in small groups. It is an excellent resource because teachers can monitor students easily. Also, teachers can control discipline because students cannot misbehave in class.

Second, the best way children learn is through games, with hands-on, songs, and other dynamic activities. For these reasons:

- Games encourage students who have a lower performance.
- Games motivate students because they are doing activities instead of being passive.
- Pupils get a chance to practice vocabulary in a meaningful and a real way.

Third, teachers and children have to be motivated before, during, and after an English class.

Fourth, the resources are important when teachers are practicing new vocabulary, but what matter most is the teacher. The teacher is the one that teaches and the resources are just aids. The teacher has to find solutions with all the materials available taking into consideration student's needs.



## **5.2 Recommendations**

After our investigation, we strongly believe that teachers should find activities that really motivate children to learn a foreign language. In this way, teachers and students will feel comfortable in class enjoying the lesson.

Another useful recommendation is that teachers should stop using traditional techniques in their classrooms. On the contrary, language games can change the environment of our classrooms and the attitude of our students towards the learning process in a meaningful way

Also, one of the best techniques that teachers should use to work with large classes is organizing groups and monitoring them constantly.

Finally, teachers should not ignore the students' point of view towards a large class. Most teachers complain about the high number of students in the classroom, but it is relieving to know that students do not care about it. They feel good being part of a crowded class. And the fact that students feel good makes it easier to teach them.



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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Survey

Encuesta para determinar la situación del estudiante frente a una clase numerosa.

Edad: \_\_\_\_\_

Año de Educación Básica: \_\_\_\_\_

Marque con una "X" debajo de cada columna que corresponda a su respuesta.

Parte 1

	si	Mucho	un poco	no
¿Te sientes a gusto y bien con el número de compañeros dentro del aula?				
¿Todos tus compañeros de aula aprenden por igual?				
¿Hay suficiente espacio dentro del aula para realizar trabajo grupal?				
¿Tu profesor te presta la suficiente atención durante la clase?				
¿Te gusta que tu profesor te tome en cuenta en clase?				
¿Tu profesor puede controlar la disciplina de cada compañero?				
¿Te distraes fácilmente durante la clase?				



**Parte 2**

	Si	Mucho	Un poco	no
¿Tu profesor utiliza actividades divertidas en clase?				
¿Te gustan las canciones, juegos, dinámicas, videos, imágenes en las clases de inglés?				
¿Te gusta trabajar con el libro de inglés?				
¿Te aburre el inglés?				
¿Crees que será útil el inglés en tu vida?				
¿Te gusta trabajar en grupo?				
¿Te gusta trabajar en forma individual?				

**Parte 3**

Encierre en un círculo su respuesta.

Que actividades te gustaría en las clases de inglés

- Canciones
- Juegos
- Dinámicas
- Hojas de trabajo
- Videos
- Llenar el libro
- Otra : \_\_\_\_\_





## Appendix 2: Interview questionnaire

### Interview with the Expert

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic:** How to practice vocabulary with large classes having limited resources in elementary school.

1. How you ever worked with large classes? Describe your experience, If you have not worked with large classes, how would you teach a large class?

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2. How effective is teaching/learning in a large class?

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3. What do we have to take into consideration to teach large classes?

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4. Which activities are useful to practice vocabulary with large classes?

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5. What alternatives do you think a teacher may use if she/he has to teach students from a public school of limited resources?

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6. Do you think our government is working to equip public schools with all the necessary resources?

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7. Do you know any approach that could help a teacher design material to teach vocabulary in large classes?

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8. How would you motivate children? Talk about your own experience?

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9. Describe some activities you use to motivate students.

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### Appendix 3: Interview Transcript

#### Interview Transcription

##### **1. How you ever worked with large classes? Describe your experience.**

What do you mean by large classes because for me large classes could be thirty students. (Yes by large classes I mean thirty or more). I worked in a private school, so students were like ten or fifteen in a class, no more than that. I have taught large classes in high schools.

How would you teach a large class?

Well, the best technique to work with large classes is working in groups. That is the best solution, and you have to face the fact that public schools, elementary or high school, they do have a lot of students, so we cannot complain all the time about large classes because that is reality. We have to find the ways or the methods...techniques to do it.

##### **2. How effective is teaching/learning in a large class?**

Well, some teachers think that working with small classes is more effective than working with large classes. However, I consider that it depends on the whole group. What I mean is if I have 20 student but they are not willing to work, for me, it will be more effective working with large classes which are motivated. It depends on the motivation. I can have classes of ten or fifteen people but if they don't want to do something, it's not effective at all. However, children are always motivated with something new. What is difficult with children is..... Trying to get their attention when the activity has overpassed like ten minutes. Their attention span is short.

##### **3. What do we have to take into consideration to teach large classes?**

Techniques... Techniques, that is the thing. We have to know a lot of techniques to work in groups and to coordinate the activities. And also in that case, one of the things you have to consider is how you are going to monitor



the group.... Because teachers who are just sitting in their desks and letting the students do the activities in group... it doesn't work.

**4. Which activities are useful to practice vocabulary with large classes?**

Which activities....ok for instance.... Content-based bingo could be one. When I mean "content-based" is a bingo that is not always ... you know....Usually teachers play bingo only with words..... The teacher says... I am going to play, then you leave a space, and you have a guitar there. And it has to be a guitar because there is no other possibility in the bingo. Content-based bingo is a really good technique or activity to develop vocabulary in context. That is something you should always remember that vocabulary could not be taught like a long list. It has to be taught in context..... Because words mean something in one context, and mean another thing in another context... Yeah... always ... bingo could be one... There's also an activity called "look for the correct answer"... on the wall you have lots of words, and students have to read a text to see what words are missing, and they look in the wall and hurry to take the word... so it is kind of context. There are many many things.... There's not one.

**5. What alternatives do you think a teacher may use if she/he has to teach students from a public school of limited resources?**

Well... again... teachers all the time complain about not having enough resources... huhhh... I have a question. What if we have a lot of technology in the classroom, but we do not know how to use it. So, for me, the teacher makes the class. Resources are helpful, but if teachers do not think on how to solve problems, even if you have a lot of technology, you won't teach.

**6. Do you think our government is working to equip public schools with all the necessary resources?**

Well, I don't think the government is doing anything about it. There is a publicity all around, the virtual classes, the virtual schools, but my question is Where are those? I've been working in a public High School for thirty three years, and, in the last four years, we haven't had any extra help for resources.



**7. Do you know any approach that could help a teacher design material to teach vocabulary with large classes?**

Well, for me, in teaching vocabulary, I mean concrete words; the best approach is through visual aids. That's definitely one that covers all the four, or eight, or six learning styles that could be in a classroom. Visuals are always something good and productive... uh huh... And we also have considered that teaching abstract words... it is most difficult to teach abstract words than concrete... That's why I all the time use visuals... ummm... Cartoons are really good resources... yeah I would say that visuals... In visuals I understand also movies and also videos... uh huh.

**8. How would you motivate children? Talk about your own experience?**

Children are always motivated with hands-on practice. They don't like to sit in there and do nothing. I will make them get bored. While they are like doing something... drawing... or coloring... or I don't know... Hands-on practice. For me, children are that hands-on practice, but.. However, I'm going to repeat. Children are the type of learners that need constant change. So if you're doing something, it has to be just for five to ten minutes, no more. You will have to change and then move backwards. If you let them work for more that fifteen minutes, they will lose concentration. That's for sure.

**9. Describe some activities you use to motivate students?**

They love listening to songs, they love watching videos. They love playing, they love most playing and singing. All these activities increase their vocabulary because they are using it. I've never used a list of words... You know what they like also ... they love role playing. If you tell them, "Ok, you act like your mom." It depends on the age. They are motivated when they have to act out like their mother or their father. They love it, yes. And visuals, pictures, and drawings... colorful pictures.



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## Appendix 4: Booklet of Activities

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*GAMES, SONGS, AND ACTIVITIES  
TO PRACTICE VOCABULARY WITH  
CHILDREN.*

Diego Avendaño & Tatiana Argudo



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# INTRODUCTION

**Teaching and practicing vocabulary could become a wonderful task if teachers use different activities in each class or a combination of them.**

**Therefore, this booklet has been designed to help teachers practice vocabulary in an effective and meaningful way, especially with children.**



# CONTENTS

## 1. GAMES

- i. **Give me that flashcard**
- ii. **Mr. Wolf**
- iii. **Swapping places**
- iv. **Hide and Guess**
- v. **Toss and catch the ball**
- vi. **Pointing to flash cards**
- vii. **Flashcards on back**
- viii. **What's the missing**
- ix. **Spider and Candy**
- x. **A shopper nightmare**

## 2. SONGS

- i. **Head, shoulders, knees and toes**
- ii. **If you're happy and you know it...**
- iii. **The Eency Weency Spider**
- iv. **The Fruit Song**
- v. **It's a dog**





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# GAMES



**1. Give me the flashcard.**

This activity is great to practice the listening skill with children, and at the same time it is a good opportunity to practice vocabulary in a fun way.

1. First, divide the class in three or four groups.
2. Stick some flashcards on the board, according to the words you will like to practice.
3. Have a member of each group stand in front of the board.
4. Say a word from the flashcards and the students will run to get the correct flashcards that correspond to the word.
5. The student who takes the flashcard first and gives it to the teacher wins one point for his group.

Note: One variation of the game would be to ask students to slap the flashcard you call out.

**2. Mr. Wolf:**

This game is perfect to practice the time with children. There are two ways to play it that we consider interesting to have fun with vocabulary.

Way number one:

1. One student is the wolf. The wolf faces the board.
2. The rest of students stand behind their desks and ask the wolf, "What time is it Mr. Wolf?" The wolf replies, "It's one o'clock."
3. The class repeats the question until Mr. Wolf says, "It's dinner time!" At this point the class freezes, and the wolf turns around and sees if anyone is moving.
4. If the wolf catches anyone moving, he or she becomes the new wolf.

Way number two:

1. One student is the wolf. The wolf faces the board.



2. Each student from the rest of the class will hold up 1 to 10 fingers, 1 arm in the air for 11, two arms in the air for 12.
3. The class asks the wolf, "What time is it Mr. Wolf?" Mr. Wolf replies with a time, e.g., "It's 5 o'clock."
4. Anyone holding up 5 becomes the wolf. If more than one student has five then the wolf picks one of them out.

### **3. Swapping places:**

This activity is great for kids since they are energetic and like to run.

1. All the students will sit making a circle. (If the group is very large, it is good to make groups)
2. One student will sit in the middle of the circle.
3. The teacher will assign a word from the vocabulary to each student, making sure that two or three students will have the same word.
4. The teacher will call out one word. The students who were assigned that word will have to switch places, and the student who is in the middle will try to sit first in one of the places available.
5. The student who is not able to sit in an empty spot will have to sit in the middle of the circle and start the activity again.

### **4. Hide and Guess**

This activity is great since children enjoy guessing.

1. A student picks up a flashcard secretly and holds that card behind his or her back
2. The other students have to guess which flashcard it is.
3. The student who guesses correctly will be given the flashcard to keep it.
4. At the end, the student who has more flashcards will win.

### **5. Toss and catch the ball**

This game can be played by the teacher and the students, or by the students only.



Teacher and students.

In order to explain this activity, we will use the topic of greetings.

1. The kids will sit in a circle.
2. The teacher will ask the whole group, "Hello, how are you?" and the group will answer back, "I'm fine thanks."
3. Then the teacher will toss the ball asking "Hello, how are you?" to any student, the student who catches the ball has to answer "I'm fine thanks."
4. For fun, you can explain the students that the ball is made of fire, so they cannot hold it for more than three seconds.

Students only:

1. The teacher will provide a list of words to practice.
2. To begin the game one student says a word from the vocabulary and toss the ball to another student.
3. The student who catches the ball has to say another word different from the one that was previously said.
4. For more fun, you can explain the students that the ball is made of fire, so they cannot hold it for more than three minutes.
5. The student who takes longer than three minutes will have to sit down. The last student wins.

**6. Pointing to flash cards.**

1. Place some flashcards on the wall.
2. Ask the student to point to a certain picture you call out.
3. You can ask students to point individually.
4. You can ask a student to call out a word.

Note: If there is space, the students can run towards the word instead of pointing.

**7. Flashcards on backs**

1. Two students will stand in front of the class, facing each other.
2. The teacher will stick a picture on each student's back.



3. The students will have to move and try to find out what their partner's word is.
4. The first one to guess what the word is will win.

### **8. What is missing?**

1. The teacher shows the students a set of flashcards and lays them on the floor.
2. The students will have to look at them and try to memorize them.
3. The teacher will ask the students to close their eyes.
4. While the students have their eyes shut, the teacher will remove one card from the group.
5. Then the students will open their eyes and will try to guess which flashcard is missing.

Note:

- In order to practice the written form of a word, you can ask the students to write down the word that corresponds to the missing flashcard. After that, you can choose the three students who finished first and give them a little gift such as a sticker or a candy.
- You can make groups and give them a set of mini flashcards. One student will remove a card and the rest will guess.

### **9. Spider and Candy**

This activity helps to practice speaking with beginners.

1. The teacher divides the class in groups.
2. The teacher places all the small flashcards face up in the middle of the group.

The students must turn around and cover their eyes

3. The teacher places one marker under each card (either a piece of candy or a spider). It could do it in a ration of about 2:1 candy and spiders. You might want to have more candy for younger students who call out a vocabulary word or make a sentence using the word.
4. The teacher lifts the card to reveal what is underneath. If it is a candy



card, the student takes the card and keeps it as one point. If it is a spider card, do not make the student take the card. Leave the spider on top of the card and proceed to the next player.

5. The person with the most candy wins!

## **10. Shopper's Nightmare**

This activity is useful to practice speaking with young children. Students can practice vocabulary using fruits.

1. The teacher divides the class in clerks and shoppers.
2. The clerks set up "stands" to allow easy access for all shoppers (e.g., around the outsides of the room with their backs to the wall).
3. The shoppers are given a set amount of money\* (e.g., dollars, euros, pounds, etc.) and begin at a stand where there is an open space.
4. Students shop, trying to accumulate as many items as possible (fruits).
5. Periodically, the instructor will say "stop" (a bell or other device may be needed to attract attention in some cultural and classroom contexts) and call out a name of one of the products. Students with that product must then put all their products in a basket at the front of the room. The remaining students continue shopping. Students who had to dump their products must begin again from scratch (with fewer units of currency). The student with the most products at the end wins. Students then change roles.



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# SONGS



**Procedure:** The following procedure is suggested to teach songs to children.

1. The teacher will introduce the song to the students.
2. The teacher will explain what the song is all about by means of flashcards.
3. Once the students are familiar with the content and vocabulary of the song, the teacher will model it.
  1. First, the teacher will practice the song without the music with the students.
  2. Then the teacher will play the music to sing along.

Following is a short list of the most popular and significant songs employed by teachers to practice vocabulary with children.

### **1. Head, shoulders, Knees and toes**

This song is useful to practice vocabulary related to the body parts. Children have to touch a certain part of the body as they sing it. Children love singing this song, especially if we increase the speed every time we repeat it.

Head, shoulders, knees and toes,  
Knees and toes.

Head, shoulders, knees and toes,  
Knees and toes.

And eyes, and ears, and mouth,  
And nose.

Head, shoulders, knees and toes,  
Knees and toes.

### **2. If you're happy and you know it...**

This is an easy song to sing whenever we are teaching emotions. The students only have to do the actions that are contained in the song.





If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands (clap your hands twice)

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands (clap your hands twice)

If you're happy and you know it and you really want to show it

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands (clap your hands twice)

If you're happy and you know it, stamp your feet \*\* ... (stamp your feet twice)

If you're happy and you know it, nod your head \*\* ... (nod your head)

If you're happy and you know it, say "we are" (we are!) ...

### 3. The Eency Weency Spider

This song is great to teach the spatial notions up/down, or the weather, or any other vocabulary words that might come up from our creativity. This song tells the story of a spider who tries to go up a water spout. Unfortunately, it started to rain which caused the spider to be dragged down the water spout by the water. Later, the sun came out and dried up all the rain. Then the spider started to climb again.

The Eency Weency Spider went up the water spout  
down came the rain and washed the spider out  
out came the sun and dried up all the rain  
and the Eency Weency Spider went up the spout again  
up, up, up and down  
up, up, up and down.

### 4. The Fruit Song.

We consider this a great song to practice vocabulary related to fruits. This song is quite simple and funny at the same time and fits any group of children perfectly.



### I Like Apples Lyrics (Easy Version)

It's yummy, yummy yummy to my  
tummy, tummy, tummy (x2)

Apples, apples, apples, apples  
I like apples, apples apples, 'cause there

yummy, yummy yummy to my  
tummy, tummy, tummy (x2)

(repeat above with bananas and oranges)

### 5. It's a dog

This song is perfect to teach vocabulary about animals. In fact, students not only practice animal words but also they practice some common verbs.

It's a dog (woof, woof)

It's a dog (woof, woof)

It's a cat (meow)

It's a cat (meow)

Repeat #1

It's a bird (chirp, chirp)

It's a bird (chirp, chirp)

It's a snake (sssss)

It's a snake (sssss)

Repeat #2

It's a rabbit (hop, hop)

It's a rabbit (hop, hop)

It's a fish (swim)

It's a fish (swim)

Repeat #3