

Class Size and Language Learning in Hong Kong: The Students' Perspective.

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Keywords: class size reduction, student voice, language learning anxiety, pedagogy

Abstract

Background: There is currently ongoing debate in Hong Kong between the teachers' union and the Government on the reduction of large class size (typically more than 40 students) in secondary schools and whether smaller class sizes might facilitate improvements in teaching and learning. In fact, many Hong Kong secondary schools have already started to experiment with class size reduction (CSR). This study seeks to investigate from the students' perspective how class size reduction might alleviate one key psychological aspect of learning in Hong Kong and Asia, namely language learning anxiety. Research has shown that language learning anxiety can have a debilitating effect on students' classroom behaviour, and this study seeks to examine whether exposure to learning in a smaller class informs such findings.

Purpose: This small-scale exploratory study aims to examine whether, and how, class size reduction might help to alleviate language learning anxiety which has long been seen as an obstacle to second language acquisition.

Method: This study employed multiple case studies in 4 Hong Kong secondary schools. Each case constituted one teacher teaching English language to first language Chinese students in a reduced-size class (where class size was between 21 and 25 students) and a large class (where class size was between 38 and 41 students) of the same year grade, and of similar academic ability. Multiple interviews were conducted with the 4 teachers and data also stemmed from group and individual interviews with 231 students. Student interview questions focused on their perspectives and experiences of studying in large and reduced-size classes. A total of 78 lessons were also observed across the 4 case studies. The data were analysed to identify any emergent patterns and themes.

Findings: The research findings indicate that students reflect on their experiences of studying in reduced-size classes in a mature and confident way. Students reported that smaller classes promoted a strong sense of security within their classroom community and seemed to weaken students' fears of negative evaluation from their peers and teachers. Students also reported that they felt more confident about participating in English lessons and these perspectives were supported by evidence from classroom observations.

Conclusions: This small-scale exploratory research study suggests that the student voice can provide insights into language learning classrooms. Data from the case studies reveal that students' sense of anxiety can be reduced in smaller classes and that class size reduction may assist in breaking down cultural barriers.

Introduction

This paper is part of a larger study on how class size reduction (CSR) in Hong Kong secondary schools can mediate teaching and learning by promoting a better classroom atmosphere which helps to alleviate the effects of the powerful and often debilitating influence of language learner anxiety. This article focuses on eliciting the student voice as a source of data believing that it will provide a powerful insight into key cultural aspects of class size reduction which have largely been overlooked when compared with the more frequent reliance on student achievement or on teachers' reports in previous class size research. Through multiple case studies in Hong Kong secondary schools it is hoped that this research study will add to our very limited knowledge base on whether, and to what extent, class size reduction influences cultural values and learning style modalities in reduced-size classes according to the students' perspective.

Class size and context of the study

This study is set in Hong Kong, a Confucian heritage-culture, where schools are often characterized by whole-class teaching and by large class sizes. Secondary school classes in Hong Kong often contain 40 students or more. In the local context, a class size of below 30 (as in this study) would most likely be seen as 'small' by teachers and students, but it is highly unlikely that such a class size would be labelled 'small' from an international perspective. For example, one of the most influential studies on class size conducted in the USA, the Student Teacher Achievement Ratio Project (or STAR Project) included 'regular' class sizes of 22-25 and 'small' class sizes of 13-17 in its examination of class size on student achievement in Tennessee, USA. These 'small' class sizes are simply not generalisable to the Hong Kong context which makes it problematic to define 'small' in the context of this study. This explains why this study chooses to focus on classes where the regular class size has been greatly reduced from the norm (from over 40 to less than 30) rather than trying to identify an optimal 'small' class size.

In Hong Kong, English Language is a compulsory subject from primary school (grade 1). All students in this study were in grade 8 or 9 and were required to sit for public examinations in English once they reached grade 11, and then again at grade 13. It should be noted that many local secondary schools have made their own attempts to

split classes or reduce numbers in highly valued subjects like English language because, very often, school managers believe that smaller classes better facilitate language learning.

Class size and language learning

Learning anxiety has been described as one of the most pervasive obstacles to language learning (Arnold and Douglas Brown, 1999), and this paper addresses the question of how it can influence teaching and learning in language lessons where class sizes vary. Learning another language has been described as a profoundly unsettling psychological proposition (Guiora, 1984), while speaking in a foreign language also arouses a great deal of stress and anxiety in learners (Allwright and Bailey, 1991). This makes it vital to consider some of the issues and factors that underpin student participation and oral production in the classroom, particularly in classes of different size. These factors may include individual learning styles, the cultural background of pupils and their psychological state in learning a second language. Clinically, language learning anxiety manifests itself in the same way as any specific anxiety: apprehension, sweating, worry, dread, lack of concentration, forgetfulness, and avoidance strategies including missing class and delaying the submission of homework (see Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1991).

Research on class size suggests that students in smaller classes may be more willing to participate by asking questions and engaging with the teacher. Such engagement may include students asking their teachers for help and clarification during lessons, either verbally or by non-verbal means, such as raising their hands or signalling for attention. Students in small classes may also sense a lighter learning atmosphere because of a stronger sense of unity and cohesion among classmates (Wang and Finn, 2000). It is possible that this may translate into more spontaneous communication acts, namely jokes, humorous exchanges and even playful challenges to their teacher. It should be noted, however, that all of this research has been conducted in Anglophone contexts like the UK and the United States which makes it unhelpful to generalize such findings to the Asian context because of its different cultural backdrop. Cultural aspects such as self esteem, confidence, and 'face' have all been well documented, with the concept of face being seen as complex and dynamic (Chang and Holt, 1994) and

directly related to the concept of communication anxiety and students' fear of making mistakes.

In the local context, cultural constraints to increased interaction such as learner anxiety and face have been well documented. Tsui's (1996) seminal examination of learner anxiety in Hong Kong revealed that it can have a debilitating effect on the learning process and should be seen as a significant variable in the learning of a second language. Tarone and Yule (1989) describe how Chinese students admit that they are reluctant to make any comments in class discussions in case they are incorrect, while many second language students fear a negative reaction from their teacher if the answer they offer is incorrect (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986). Other reasons for this apprehension have been promoted by Jin and Cortazzi (1998) who believe that Chinese students ask questions after learning something because the learners feel that any questions posed should be based on knowledge and not simply to find out information. Drawing on comparisons with British students, they claim that while Chinese students ask questions to their teachers after knowing something, their British counterparts will ask questions in order to know. Flowerdew and Miller (1995) note that local learners are reluctant to challenge their teachers or show disagreement with anything that the teacher says in the classroom, while Littlewood (2000) highlights the stereotypical view that the teacher in Asia is viewed by students as an authority figure rather than a facilitator of learning, which may also act as a brake on student participation in class.

Tsui's (1996) study showed that many teachers heighten students' anxiety in the classroom by providing insufficient wait time and by asking questions which are not clearly understood by the learners or because the teacher insists on the students providing a particular answer to a question. The conclusion, therefore, is an enhanced state of anxiety and fear in the second language classroom which then limits students' oral production and general participation. The outcome can often be a reticent learner who would prefer to stay silent in language lessons; in sum, students may adopt a passive role in classroom activities. In fact, Tsui (1996) maintains that unless teachers are able to recognize, and then properly attend to, language learning anxiety, students may well remain reluctant participants in classroom interaction and suffer from poor self-esteem as communicators. Recently, there has been renewed interest in China and

Asia on how language learning anxiety in Confucian-heritage cultures impacts on English language learners (see Xie, 2010; Harumi, 2011).

Examining the students' views on whether smaller class sizes might be able to break down cultural barriers in multiple secondary school classes is the goal of this study and addresses a gap in the class size literature, which has often overlooked the student voice as a source of insight. In some ways this is understandable, as the vast majority of class size studies have taken place in early childhood contexts where students may not be able to articulate their views and experiences on learning in reduced-size classes (see, for example, Finn and Achilles, 1999; Blatchford, 2003; Galton and Pell, 2010). Many of these studies have chosen to draw on teachers' reports instead and, although these are crucial perspectives to consider, the voice of the student body arguably merits equal attention as they are the "first level consumers of educational services" (Erikson and Shultz, 1991, p.481).

Other studies that have questioned the value of small classes in promoting better teaching and learning have largely been based on examining the academic attainment in reduced-size classes against the backdrop of economic factors (see Hanushek, 1998; Jenson, Hunter, Sonnemann, and Burns, 2012). Unfortunately, these studies have not considered the affective factors which are present in language classrooms. This study rests on the position that the student voice in a secondary school context is a legitimate object of inquiry for enhancing our understanding of how teaching and learning might be shaped in classes of different size.

Methods and data collection

Data was derived from multiple student interviews and classroom observations carried out through multiple case studies of large and reduced-size classes in 4 secondary schools in Hong Kong. Adoption of a multiple case study is to determine if findings can be found across more than one case, and this replication strategy (Yin, 1991) then helps to strengthen our understanding of individual cases. A 'case' in this study constitutes one teacher teaching in a reduced-size class and a large class. Each case then provides an opportunity to understand and explain any differences that are identified. So, by taking a particular case and understanding it well, it is possible to determine what it is and what it does (Stake, 1995, p.8). Case studies possess several

characteristics which make them appealing. They are readable, often engaging and contain a great deal of analysis which may, in turn lead to new hypotheses and understandings about language learning or related processes (Merriam, 1998). The case studies also allow for the interpretation of observable phenomena that is in context. In addition, they have proved invaluable in illuminating some of the fine detail in what makes small classes different to larger ones (Blatchford, 2003, Galton and Pell, 2010).

A research design was adopted whereby both large and reduced-size classes were taught by the *same* teacher, a design which differs from previous studies of class size reduction where the teacher variable was not controlled (Blatchford, 2003, Galton and Pell, 2010). This article reports on 8 classes (one large and one smaller class in four secondary schools) with the smallest class consisting of 21 students and the largest class containing 41 students (see table 1, below, for class sizes).

Table 1: Class sizes in each Case Study

| Case study | Grade level /age) | Reduced-class size | Large class size |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Case Study I | Grade 9 (age 14-15) | n= 25 | n= 41 |
| Case Study II | Grade 8 (age 13-14) | n= 24 | n= 38 |
| Case Study III | Grade 8 (age 13-14) | n= 25 | n= 40 |
| Case Study IV | Grade 9 (age 14-15) | n= 21 | n= 39 |

All the students in the study were first language Chinese learners and were aged between 13 and 15. They were studying English which, along with Chinese Language and Mathematics, is a compulsory subject for all Hong Kong students from grade 1 of Primary school. The four teachers were native Chinese, each possessing between 6 and 13 years' experience of teaching English. All teachers volunteered to participate in the study and research sites were identified through an extensive contact with local secondary schools. For the research data to be valid and reliable the classes in each case study needed to be of comparable ability, and this was addressed by consulting school examination results from the respective classes in the study. All schools were co-educational and there was no random control over the choice of student subjects; this was guided by the school's arrangement of having the same teacher teach both classes. Teachers were given one large and one smaller class of the same grade largely due to

workload and timetabling issues in each case school; these classes were also part of their regular teaching schedule. In each institution the selection of students in each class was done randomly, meaning there was no streaming of particular students or groups.

Data reported on in this paper stem from group and semi-structured individual interviews with 231 students from the large and reduced-size classes (out of a total of 255 students). Interviews were conducted in English (students were asked if they wanted to be interviewed in their mother tongue, Cantonese, but all asked to use English), and interview questions focused on the following areas: important episodes and incidents from observed lessons; students' own views on what they liked and disliked about learning English in large and reduced-sized classes, their views on learning and teaching in their respective class, their views on peer relationships in their respective classes; their participation in class and reasons for engagement in their respective class, and cultural aspects including their views on language learning anxiety.

Classroom observations ensured that a more emic perspective was taken as a way of throwing light on participants' perspectives and actions (Watson-Gegeo, 1988). These observations were also aimed at triangulating data from student interviews. Teachers' control over the class may well act as a block to student interaction (Xie, 2010) so observations of the same teacher working in large and reduced-size classes also provided the opportunity to identify pedagogical decisions, if any, that may have impacted on students' participation in class. A total of 78 lessons were observed with one whole cycle of teaching (or 7-8 lessons) being observed in each class. All observations were conducted without any form of participation on the part of the researcher. Video recordings were subsequently transcribed with salient episodes being extracted for qualitative analysis. Interview and lesson transcripts underwent an iterative process of data reduction and verification. 'Codes' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.56) were assigned to different components of the data, including words, phrases and sentences so that interview transcripts could be broken down into discrete sections. Data reduction was also carried out through the production of categories (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.114), and developing categories into emergent theoretical insights (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Potential threats to the trustworthiness of this research are the notions of social desirability and demand characteristics. For example, students and teachers might behave differently from how they would normally, or say things which are seen as desirable to the interviewer or others. Certain factors helped to minimize the above threats. Firstly, there was a prolonged engagement with each case, combined with a persistent observation of the salient features in each case (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), and secondly it was deemed important to establish a trusting relationship with participants. At the outset each teacher was provided with a general introduction to the study to ensure that they did not feel threatened by having their lessons observed for more than a week (Stenhouse, 1975). The principles of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality were also strictly observed. All oral data (interview transcripts and lesson transcripts) were shown to participants to ensure member checking and respondent validity (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen, 1993).

Interview Findings

Students reflected in a mature and confident way about their experiences of learning in large and reduced-size classes. All the students in the smaller classes wanted to contribute perspectives and, while some students were more articulate and detailed than others, all were consistent in their support of smaller classes. At no point in the interviews did students make personal criticisms of their teachers, or school. Interview responses from students in the reduced-size classes were overwhelmingly positive, and contrasted strikingly with the views expressed by their peers in larger classes. As a result of organising themes from the initial coding of interview data, a number of key student perspectives were identified but due to a lack of space in this paper emphasis will be placed on the following,

- Students in smaller classes were more aware of support provided by classmates
- Students in smaller classes sensed having more confidence in speaking up and participating in class
- These same students were less anxious about receiving negative evaluation from peers
- They also perceived a reduced loss of ‘face’ when compared to studying in a larger class

Interview data showed that students from reduced-size classes felt more secure within their classroom community and were not concerned about negative evaluation

from their peers. This appeared to be due to the powerful support system that underpinned the class relations in the smaller classes as the following excerpts reveal:

In a large class the students laugh at me but not in the small class. We are friends and we support each other. It is easier in a small class because I know my classmates and we help each other. (Case Study I - Small)

I know that my classmates will help me if I make a mistake. I don't worry so much about making mistakes now. I feel happy. (Case Study II - Small)

I would never ask a teacher a question in class because other classmates might laugh at me. Now I feel better about asking...the students are better now...not so many...I like speaking with classmates now. Not so much pressure as before. (Case Study II - Small)

This sense of security appeared to provide students with the confidence to use more English in class as the following interview extracts demonstrate:

I like small class as I know my classmates better now. I'm not nervous about speaking to them now. I use more English in this class. (Case Study II - Small)

It's better than before. I speak more than before. More chances [to speak] and it's easier with fewer classmates. I do not worry about others laughing at me. I used to worry a lot and that is why I kept silent. Not now. (Case Study III - Small)

Fewer students in the class make it (speaking) easier...not so frightening. I like English much more this year compared to before. (Case Study IV - Small)

Students explained that in a large class there are many classmates who they don't really know or "don't trust"; this sense of unfamiliarity seems to enhance the social anxiety when students are asked to speak or present in front of others. Smaller classes appeared to allow students the chance to make verbal presentations to the whole class safe in the knowledge that they have a better understanding of their classmates and greater trust in their role as a supportive audience or assessor. Smaller class size here suggests a psychological change in students and contrasts strikingly with comments from their peers studying in the larger classes who also offered their opinions on studying in their respective class:

I get nervous speaking in class. I prefer the teacher does not ask me questions. I do not like presentations but we always have them in English. (Case Study

I - Large)

It's OK to answer questions but no one does it freely. The teacher picks on us and we must answer her but I try not to answer. Sometimes I know the answer but then I don't answer. I don't want to answer. (Case Study I - Large)

I don't want to lose face. You know this is very important in the class and others will say harsh things if we are wrong. I am uncomfortable...we feel uncomfortable. (Case Study II - Large)

Someone will lose face when he answers a question. I like to talk to my friends but not the whole class. So scared to give a presentation...I am very nervous when our teacher asks us to stand up and read or speak. (Case Study III - Large)

Another theme which emerged from the interviews with students from large and reduced-size classes was the sense of 'spirit' or community in the smaller classes. Students talked about knowing each other better in smaller cohorts and of feeling closer to one another, as the following excerpts show:

I have not had class spirit like this before. I have many friends in the class and not like before. In my other class I knew some people but here I talk to all my friends. We are a group. (Case Study I - Small)

A smaller class means that we can be more together and more of a class. We help each other because we are in this class. We know others better... so we help. The class size makes us have a closer relationship. (Case Study II - Small)

I did not speak to many classmates before [in the large class] but this year I know everyone here. It's much better as we know our characters more. (Case Study III - Small)

I think we are all part of the same class. We have a good relationship with each other and the teacher so we know each other and we help each other. Our teacher helps us all the time so we are all together. (Case Study IV - Small)

The final comment above is interesting in that the respondent appears to be including her teacher in the class 'group'. Seeing the teacher as a member of the classroom community, rather than a figure of authority on the outside of the class may explain why students feel less nervous when speaking in the smaller classes. In contrast to the positive comments from the smaller cohorts, students in the larger classes reported a very different social landscape in their own learning contexts:

We have a group of friends and we just talk in that group. Others have another group of friends...so many small groups in the class. We are not like a class but many different groups. (Case Study II - Large)

I have not spoken to some classmates this whole year. We don't work together. I don't want to talk to others. (Case Study III - Large)

Even though there are many girls in this class...we don't always communicate. I have my friends and they have their friends so why come together? It is OK to be like this. (Case Study IV - Large)

We are all in the same class but we don't really know each other...I would say we are all different. (Case Study IV - Large)

The difference between the viewpoints is revealing. While students in smaller classes seemed to appreciate the support from each other and were empowered by the stronger sense of community, their peers in the larger classes described more fragmented classes which were characterized by lots of within-class splinter groups, or cliques of friends. In the large classes, no student referred to their teacher as being part of the class community, or 'group'.

Classroom observations

Observation data is consistent with evidence gleaned from student interviews. Students in reduced-size classes had no apparent fear of giving answers and often shouted them out, highlighting the difference between the two classes in the way they perceived negative evaluation from peers. One short extract from the smaller class in Case Study III demonstrates the willingness of students to engage with their teacher in a light-hearted way when their teacher asked for a definition for the word 'essential':

Extract 1 from a reduced-size class (T: Teacher / S1, S2 etc: Individual students)

1. T: Essential? Does anyone know what this word means?
2. S1: Good
3. T: It's more than good. It's more than good.
4. S2: Excellent
5. T: No, not excellent.
6. S3: Fantastic
7. S4: Brilliant
8. T: Enough. I don't want any more. You know the answer. I know you know the answer. What is it?
9. S5: Important
10. T: Finally. Thank you. [students laugh] (Case Study III - Small)

In the corresponding large class of Case Study III (n=40) the teacher asked the same question to her class, but there was no response from the class. Finally, the teacher wrote the answer on the blackboard for the learners to copy down.

Another striking feature of observations in reduced-size classes was the unconditional support that students appeared to give each other. In one case the teacher asked the class if they were able to process some information from the text that they were reading, and the following exchange was recorded from the lesson transcription:

Extract 2 from a reduced-size class:

(T2: Teacher of large class / S1, S2 etc: Individual students)

1. T2: Do you need help? [to an individual student]
2. S1: [from the student's neighbour] He needs help but I'll help him Miss
3. T2: Do you want me to help?
4. S1: I can help him. I can help him. [working with neighbour]
5. T2: OK. Let me know if you need help from me... (Case Study II - Small)

Class size research suggests that teachers tend to teach large and small classes in the same way (Shapson et al, 1980; Rice, 1999) and, in this study, teachers taught the same materials, subject content and largely adopted the same tasks and activities in both their large and reduced-size classes. Notably, though, some subtle but important differences were observed. Teachers in the smaller classes used more open questions when interacting with students and crucially, gave more wait-time when inviting students to offer answers and suggestions. All four teachers reorganized their classroom layouts more in the smaller classes which facilitated increased interaction between students in the form of pair and group work. One teacher had a 'no-hands' policy in her reduced-size class meaning that students could shout out answers or ask questions at any time but in her larger class, students were required to put up their hands if they wanted to ask or answer a question. Another difference was the way teachers used students' names more often in the smaller classes; an individualized approach in smaller classes contrasted with a more formal, whole class instruction in larger classes. These findings and their implications will be discussed next.

Discussion

This small-scale study suggests how valuable the student voice can be in illuminating research on second language classrooms. As a result of engaging with

students, findings from this study suggest that reduced-size classes may well help to weaken the psychological state of language learner anxiety on second language learners and assist in overcoming the 'face' issues reported in other studies of learning in Confucian-heritage cultures. Asian classrooms have been characterized as "collectivist" in that aspects such as self-esteem and face, in particular, can negatively influence the behaviour and participation of learners. Interestingly in this study, while these characteristics were to be found in the large classes observed, they were much less prominent in the small classes. Students in the smaller classes openly admitted that they could "speak up" more and that it had given them a lot of confidence when compared to their previous learning experience in larger classes. Humour also seemed more prevalent in the smaller class as students enjoyed making spontaneous comments to their teacher or to each other.

The importance of the reduced sense of anxiety in the small classes cannot be overstated because it seemed to facilitate greater participation by students in classroom discourse and language learning tasks. Crucially, student responses suggest that being in smaller classes helped them to feel less discomfort speaking in English when compared with their peers in larger classes. This runs contrary to the stereotype of Confucian heritage-culture classrooms (Biggs, 1996) and of Hong Kong learners as reticent and passive in language lessons (Tsui, 1996). The students' acknowledgment that they liked English more and were willing to speak up more as a result of being in a smaller class also tends to reinforce Littlewood's (2000) finding that Asian students really *do* want to engage in collective tasks and activities in class.

Data in this study reveal that students believed the smaller classes had mediated closer relationships among class members with more of a "we-identity" (Ting-Toomey, 1994) being identified in the smaller classes. Students in the smaller classes sensed that they were part of a classroom 'community' and recognised each other, and their teacher, as important members of that community. Students reported helping each other more in smaller classes and observations revealed that teachers adopted group work more often in their reduced-size classes. This highlights the importance of teacher sensitivity towards the distinction between an individual culture and a group one when shaping the classroom landscape. Examples from the small classes are consistent with Confucian

value of co-operation, and evidence from the case studies suggests that this sense of co-operation can weaken the influence of language learning anxiety.

Another way of explaining the apparent reduced anxiety in the small classes is by looking at the way the teachers implemented their pedagogy in large and reduced-size classrooms. In the smaller classes students had more opportunities for participation through the teachers' use of open questioning techniques. Open questions can allow students to produce more complex answers and make mistakes through which they can receive the teacher's feedback, an integral aspect of learning. Teachers also seemed to give their students more time to answer questions in the small classes. Wait time seemed to be extended when teachers addressed individual students, suggesting a higher level of support at this interaction mode. While students identified their peers as a powerful supporting network in class and the reason for their increased confidence in participating in class tasks and activities, this study has shown that the teachers' granting of opportunities for access to participation is also an important mediating factor in reducing learner anxiety. This has implications for teacher trainers and school managers designing professional development courses for teachers.

Conclusions

Examining whether reductions in class size might assist in breaking down cultural barriers has helped to address a gap in the literature on class size research. A limitation of this study is the focus on just four cases (eight classes and four teachers) so any conclusions drawn are tentative at best. However, the notion of seeking students' perceptions on learning in large and reduced-size classes as well as triangulating that information with classroom observation data has been valuable and meaningful.

The previously cited report from the Grattan Institute on how the world can learn from the best school systems in East Asia suggests that large class sizes appear to be a trade-off for greater academic achievement in its analysis of school systems in Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Shanghai (Jenson, Hunter, Sonnemann and Burns, 2012). However, an advantage of studies like the one reported in this paper is that the pupils' voice represents a different perspective to the important issue of how class size can mediate teaching and learning. By drawing on the affective-related factors which influence language learning, studies like this might help to open the classroom's 'black box' and lead to a better understanding of the complex dynamics of Asian classrooms

where class size has been reduced. Another strength of the research approach adopted in this study lies in comparing what students say about their classroom context with what they subsequently do in that classroom. Conclusions outlined earlier point to the need for a deeper examination of students and teachers working in large and reduced-sized classes through the organization of longitudinal studies that capture the reality and fine details of the classroom context.

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Appendix 1

Table 1: Class sizes in each Case Study

| Case study | Grade level /age) | Reduced-class size | Large class size |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Case Study I | Grade 9 (age 14-15) | n= 25 | n= 41 |
| Case Study II | Grade 8 (age 13-14) | n= 24 | n= 38 |
| Case Study III | Grade 8 (age 13-14) | n= 25 | n= 40 |
| Case Study IV | Grade 9 (age 14-15) | n= 21 | n= 39 |