The author identifies and discusses the tensions that emerge between two approaches to teaching early-number: a traditional n + 1 approach, and a counting-based approach. Five classroom observations are examined from the same first-grade classroom at a Mexican public school. The observations were made several years after a constructivist-inspired curriculum reform was implemented. Observations show that the teacher was not keen to modify her understandings of what are numbers and how to teach them, despite the new curricular guidelines. Even when using instructional materials containing the pedagogical innovation, the teacher shows no interest in modifying her established ways of teaching. She responds to instructional situations that emerged from using the reformed materials by strengthening the rules of the didactical contract she commonly establishes in her classroom. Nevertheless, the observations show that changes are possible. In one of the sessions, as the class worked on one of the activities suggested by the reformed materials, the prevalent didactical contract was breached and the mathematical activity in the classroom was conducted freely despite the teachers initial resistance.

**Keywords**
mathematics, educational reform, constructivism, teaching of numbers, didactical contract, custom, communication networks, regulations, didactical balance.