



An Investigation of Preschool Teachers' Use and Planning of Classroom Transition Activities*

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Abstract

Transitions in preschool education are a process that contributes significantly to children's development. Transitions in the classroom facilitate children's learning, improve social cohesion, and contribute to classroom management. Research shows that transition strategies can improve children's social-emotional skills, reduce problem behaviors, and provide effective classroom management. In this research, preschool teachers' use and planning of in-class transition activities were examined. The participants of this research consist of a total of 17 teachers working in kindergartens in Ankara and Konya. Participants were selected using convenience sampling method. In this study, interview and observation methods were used to determine teachers' views on classroom transitions and the strategies used. The research data were analyzed using the content analysis method and attention was paid to the importance of validity, reliability and the role of the researcher in qualitative research. In the results of this study, which examined preschool teachers' views on classroom transitions and their use and planning of classroom transition activities, the teachers participating in the research defined classroom transitions as "transition between regularly planned activities". Teachers' views on classroom transitions were "transition between activities", "work that prevents disconnection between activities", "preparing children for the next activity" and "connecting activities". Teachers stated that they paid attention to the individual characteristics of the children, the balance of the curriculum and the physical condition of the classroom while planning classroom transitions. It was also observed that teachers mostly used auditory strategies and had problems with transitions after free time activities. The findings obtained from the research were discussed in the light of the study results in the literature and suggestions were presented.

Key Words

Classroom transition
Classroom management
Preschool education

About Article

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Introduction

Preschool education is considered an important process that contributes to children's physical, social, cognitive, and emotional development. Transitions, which occur during the activities, are one of the most essential parts of the preschool education program. Common transitions used in preschool are from home to school, from small group to large group activities, from large group to small group activities, from inside to outside, from classroom activities to meals, and from school to home (Banerjee & Horn, 2012).

Young children need developmentally appropriate routines and schedules that allow for movement and engaging activities. Transitions are the connective tissue that holds together the various activities of the day (Peterson, 2000). Transitions are part of the daily routine for every individual. However, it is often difficult for young children to transition between activities, places, and events. When transitions between activities in the classroom are thought out and planned in advance, children transition more easily (Register & Humpal, 2007). At transition times, children need to finish the activity in hand, focus on and understand the teacher's instructions, cope with the distractions caused by the movements and behaviors of their peers, and coordinate the materials during the cleaning or preparation of the work area. Teachers are also challenged during transition times as they are simultaneously busy with many things, such as providing a set of instructions, organizing materials, and supervising children's social and physical movements (Buck, 1999). Because of their temperament, some children have difficulty coping with the noise and movement at transition times. It is unrealistic to demand that while some children are engaged in activities during transition times, others just wait patiently. In such a situation, children may exhibit disturbing behaviors to relieve their boredom (Fields, Meritt & Fields, 2018).

Preschool teachers can facilitate children's learning by providing effective classroom management through various classroom transition strategies. Among these strategies are setting clear classroom rules and routines, meeting children's emotional needs, teaching students' alternative behaviors, and developing emotional literacy skills. Transition activities can be challenging for both teachers and children, as many tasks have to be performed simultaneously. Therefore, teachers should plan in advance how and when they will communicate with other staff, as a transition strategy, as well as the materials they will use during the activities. In such planning, tasks and responsibilities should be determined not only for children but also for adults (Olive, 2004).

Classroom transitions are the orderly sequencing of activities, games, and events in the classroom. During transitions, the learning process continues as children move from one activity to the next, fostering harmony and cooperation among them. Classroom transitions help children maintain their learning focus and understand classroom rules. They also help to keep the classroom running smoothly. Carefully planned transition strategies facilitate the elimination of children's problem behaviors that occur during transitions between activities (Banerjee & Horn, 2012). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) commends predictable and structured daily routines in which children feel safe. Teachers should also create opportunities to broaden children's ideas and interests. Children's problem behaviors during transitions are related to the structuring, planning, and implementation of transitions (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, Artman & Kinder, 2008). When planning the classroom environment to facilitate transitions, unproductive time for children should be minimized, more instructional time should be provided, challenging behaviors should be reduced, and children's freedom should be supported (Ostrosky, Jung & Hemmeter, 2002).

Research in the literature reveals that preschool teachers can improve children's social-emotional skills, reduce their problem behaviors, and provide effective classroom management by using transition strategies. The Head Start REDI program aids preschool teachers in using classroom transition strategies to help children develop language, mathematics, and social-emotional skills. This program enables preschool teachers to use classroom transition strategies such as setting clear classroom rules and routines and developing children's problem-solving and collaboration skills. Hence, the program has been shown to have positive effects on children's academic and social-emotional skills through classroom transition strategies (Bierman et al., 2008). Kaiser and Sklar Rasminsky (2017) report that when preschool teachers use classroom transition strategies, children's problem behaviors decrease.

Using classroom transition strategies to teach the skills of recognizing, expressing, and regulating emotions, to help describe emotional situations, and to develop empathy and social skills contributes to the development of children's emotional literacy skills (Izard & King, 2014). The use of classroom transition strategies in preschool period is important for classroom management, reducing problem behaviors, and children's social-emotional development. Using transitions between activities in preschool facilitates teaching social skills and emotional competence and planning the work process. Through transitions, the teacher encourages children to work together and gives them descriptive feedback when they have completed something. When a child has a friend to sit with, friendship skills such as walking down the hall in pairs or pairing up during games also facilitate transitions (Hemmeter et al., 2008).

Research on classroom transitions in preschool education in Türkiye is limited and generally focuses on classroom management (Denizel Güven & Cevher, 2005; Gülay Ogelman & Ersan, 2014; Ocak Karabay & Şahin Ası, 2019; Öztürk, Gangal & Beşken Ergişi, 2014; Yaşar Ekici, Günhan & Anılan, 2017). Research on classroom transitions shows that pre-service and in-service preschool teachers include classroom transition activities in their classroom practices (Bozan, Bay, Demir & Karahallı, 2021; Bakkaloğlu & Ergin, 2020; Korkmaz, Esen Çoban & Koyuncu Şahin, 2018). Bakkaloğlu & Ergin (2020), examining classroom transitions in preschool classrooms where inclusion practices were carried out, found that all the teachers participating in the study used transition strategies in transitions between activities. The study determined that the teachers preferred verbal reminders more in transitions. In the study by Korkmaz et al. (2018) on pre-service preschool teachers, the pre-service teachers stated that they considered classroom transitions important in terms of children, teachers, and curriculum. Although the pre-service teachers mostly used verbal reminders with auditory support, they did not plan transition activities in the daily flow of education. Bozan et al. (2021) examined the auditory strategies used by preschool teachers in classroom activity transitions and found that the teachers used songs and music the most.

It is essential for an effective educational process that teachers know what to do in subsequent activities and how to provide transitions, in addition to knowing what to teach, how to teach, and when to teach. These transitions provide many benefits, such as maximizing children's learning potential, improving their social and emotional skills, and enhancing their self-discipline and time management skills. Therefore, teachers' proper planning and implementation of classroom transitions will enable preschool children to be successful in the learning process. The present study was warranted given the insufficiency of research on classroom transitions in preschool education and the potential of such research to increase the awareness of in-service and pre-service teachers about transitions. In this regard, the aim of this study is to explore preschool teachers' views on classroom transitions and their use of classroom transitions. To this end, answers to the following questions are sought:

1. What are preschool teachers' views on classroom transitions?
2. How do preschool teachers plan classroom transitions?
3. What kinds of strategies do preschool teachers use for classroom transitions?
4. What kind of problems do preschool teachers encounter in classroom transitions?

Method

This study was conducted as a qualitative research design. "Qualitative research can be defined as research in which qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and document analysis are used, and a qualitative process is followed to reveal perceptions and events in a realistic and holistic way in the natural environment" (Yıldırım, 1999, p. 10). This research has qualitative research characteristics in that it examines preschool teachers' views on classroom transitions using different data collection methods.

Study group

The participants of this study are 17 preschool teachers working in preschool education institutions affiliated to the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) of Türkiye, who were selected through convenience sampling from Türkiye's Ankara and Konya provinces. Convenience sampling, which is a purposive sampling method, refers to the selection of a sample that is quickly and easily accessible in terms of time, money, and space (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Voluntary preschool teachers whom the researchers could reach were included in the study.

Table 1. Demographic information about the participants

Variables		f
Gender	Female	17
	Male	-
Age	26-30	7
	31-35	1
	36-40	4
	41 and above	5
Education level	Associate's degree	1
	Bachelor's degree	10
	Postgraduate degree	6
Professional experience	1-5 years	-
	6-10 years	8
	11-15 years	1
	16-20 years	3
	21 and above	5
School type	Kindergarten under an elementary or middle school	6
	Independent nursery school	6
	University practice nursery school	5

As shown in Table 1, all the teachers participating in the study were female. Most of the teachers were in the 26-30 age range, had a bachelor's degree, and had 6-10 years of professional experience. Six of the teachers worked in a kindergarten under an elementary school, six in an independent nursery school, and five in a university practice nursery school. All the teachers had taken a classroom management course.

Data Collection Tool

Data were collected through interviews and observations. To examine teachers' views on classroom transitions, a semi-structured "Teacher Interview Form on Classroom Transitions" which was created by taking the opinions of three experts in the field of pre-school education, was used. Semi-structured interview forms allow asking additional questions besides predetermined questions during the interview to obtain in-depth information (Merriam, 2009). The teacher interview form addressed all the sub-problems of the study. The interview form consists of a total of fifteen questions: six questions about demographic information and nine questions about the research questions. In order to answer the third and fourth research questions of the study, observations were made in preschool classrooms. Observation is the process of collecting data from specific subjects, such as individuals, society, or nature, with the naked eye or with the help of any tool to obtain information about a situation (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2009). The non-participant observation method was used in the present study. The non-participant observer observes as an outsider without interacting with activities or people (Cresswell, 2013). The researchers made non-participant observations to determine the types of classroom transition strategies used by the teachers and to identify the problems they encountered during transition times. The "Observation Form for Classroom Transitions", which was created based on the literature review and created by taking the opinions of three experts in the field of pre-school education was used in the observation process. This form aimed

to collect information about the strategies used by the teachers in classroom transitions and the problems arising in classroom transitions.

Data Collection Process

The data were collected in the spring semester of the 2018-2019 academic year. Prior to the data collection process, the necessary permissions were obtained from MoNE. First, pilot interviews were conducted with three preschool teachers to determine the clarity and comprehensibility of the interview form. Based on the information obtained from the pilot study, one question that was not understood by the participants was removed from the interview form. In addition, a question was added to provide deeper information about the problems experienced during classroom transitions. For the main implementation, the teachers were contacted and informed about the study in advance. Voluntary participation forms were introduced to the teachers who agreed to participate in the study and signed by the teachers. An appointment was made with the teachers for the interviews, and the interviews were conducted in a quiet environment where the teacher and the researcher were alone. All the teachers gave permission for voice recordings to be taken during the interviews. Observations were conducted in the classrooms of three voluntary teachers who engaged in classroom transitions. A total of six observations were made in the observed teachers' classrooms, twice on different days.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using the content analysis method. Content analysis is the process of deriving meaning from the obtained qualitative data by bringing together similar ones (Patton, 2002). The first step in analyzing qualitative data is to gather the raw data. From among the data read in detail, those providing answers to the research question are coded, and similar codes are combined under a common theme or category (Cresswell, 2014). This study used an inductive analysis approach because the codes and themes were not predetermined. The inductive analysis approach refers to the emergence of codes, themes, or categories in the data analysis process (Patton, 2002). In this study, codes and themes were not created in advance but emerged during the data analysis process.

Validity and Reability

In qualitative research, validity refers to the measurement of what the research aims to measure and the accuracy of findings, while reliability refers to the achievability of the same results if the research is conducted again (Merriam, 2009). In this study, first, the literature was reviewed to ensure the validity of the interview form. Three experts in the field of preschool education were consulted in order to determine whether the interview form provided answers to the research questions. A pilot study was conducted with three preschool teachers to determine the clarity and comprehensibility of the questions in the interview form. Another method applied to ensure research validity is data triangulation (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Data were collected through interviews and observations to ensure the consistency of codes and categories. Member checking or respondent validation is another validity strategy (Merriam, 2009) used for this research. The data obtained from the interviews and observations and the initial codes and categories derived from their analysis were sent to four teachers randomly selected from among the participants for member checking. The process is described in detail, and excerpts from the interview transcripts are included in this paper.

For reliability, observation and interview transcripts were checked by the researchers at different times, thereby reaching consensus on their accuracy. Intercoder agreement was determined by comparing the codes created by different researchers (Cresswell, 2014). After the data obtained from the interviews and observations were coded by the researchers, the consistency between the codes was checked.

Researcher's Role

During the present research process, the researchers maintained consistency among all participants and informed them about the study. The interviews were conducted in a quiet environment where the participants felt comfortable, and the interviewing researcher and the participant were alone during the interview. As per their role as non-participant observers, the researchers made observations

in the classrooms without participating in the activities. They observed the class and activities at a location indicated by the teacher.

Findings

This section of presents the findings obtained from the observations and interviews with the preschool teachers. The findings are analyzed based on the research questions. Information about the analyses is tabulated, and excerpts from the interviews are included below.

Table 2. Preschool teachers' views on classroom transitions

Category	Code	f
Classroom transitions	Transitions between activities	10
	Work that prevents disconnection between activities	2
	Facilitating the transition to the next activity	2
	Preparing children for the next activity	2
	Linking activities together	1

As shown in Table 2, the teachers mostly defined classroom transitions as “transitions between activities”. They also offered the definitions “work that prevents disconnection between activities”, “facilitating the transition to the next activity”, “preparing children for the next activity”, and “linking activities together”. They expressed their views on classroom transitions as follows:

T13: *“I can define them as, um, engaging works done to avoid disconnection between the activities when moving from one activity to another during the day.”*

T1: *“I understand it as activity transition. Many different methods in activity transition... Depending on the activity, depending on the time of the day, depending on the attitude of the students, of the class that day, a moving transition or something similar can be made.”*

T4: *“Let me say linking, transitioning when moving from one activity to another, so that children can connect to the activity a little more easily, so that they can comprehend it more easily.”*

Table 3. Preschool teachers' use of classroom transitions

Code	f
Yes	17
No	-

As shown in Table 3, all the participating preschool teachers stated that they performed classroom transitions.

Table 4. Preschool teachers' considerations when planning classroom transitions

Category	Code	f
Individual characteristics	Children's interest	5
	Status of having special needs/individual differences	4
	Age group	3
Curriculum	Balancing active and passive activities	6
	Relevance to the purpose of the activity	4
	Activity type	2
	Daily flow	1
	Connectivity of activities	1
Physical condition of the classroom	Number of children	5
	Class size/physical layout	4

Situations that teachers pay attention to when planning classroom transitions have been examined. According to Table 4 teachers stated the most common considerations stated by the participants were about the curriculum, such as “balancing active and passive activities”, “relevance to the purpose of the activity”, “activity type”, “daily flow”, and “connectivity of activities”. Then they mentioned considerations in terms of children, such as “children's interest”, “status of having special

needs/individual differences”, and “age group”. The teachers also considered the physical conditions of the classroom, such as “number of children” and “class size/physical layout”, when planning transitions. They expressed their considerations when planning classroom transitions as follows:

T1: “Class size may be more effective in positioning when preparing materials. The crowd of students may affect this. Um, class size. Of course, if the class is crowded, you need to be more careful, especially when receiving them.”

T7: “I take children’s interests and wishes into consideration. I want them to be more dynamic, active, and lively. This is my favorite for them.”

T8: “The condition of the classroom, the number of children, the materials I have, the physical condition of the classroom... I pay attention to all of them.”

T10: “While planning, for example, if the completed activity is an active one, we include transition activities as a buffer... If our next activity is a quiet activity, for instance, we include transition activities in a way that will ensure the transition is appropriate to the level of activity, neither completely quiet nor very active.”

T13: “In general, I try to follow active activities with relaxing ones. After the relaxing activity, I put them into action a little bit more slowly. Not making the children sit down when they are very active, I move towards a little bit of relaxing work. Sometimes, children’s daily moods can also change. Sometimes, they don’t want to participate in quiet work at all, so we focus more on outside work and other things.”

T14: “The number of children, individual differences, children requiring special education, age groups... If there’s a work on the senses, I make sure that there’s a smooth transition to it, or at least that there’s a connection. It’s important to make the child curious and then satisfy their curiosity at the end of the work. If there’s an experiment, like a rain experiment, it’s important to get their attention by making an introduction about it. It’s important that the introduction is relevant to the subject.”

Table 5. Teachers’ views on the importance of classroom transitions

Category	Code	f
For teacher	Classroom management	12
	Time management	3
	Prevention of problem behaviors	2
	Sticking to the plan	2
For child	Adaptation to the activities	8
	The child feeling safe	4
	Achieving the activity objective	2
	Social skill development	1
For curriculum	Classroom management	7
	Adaptation to the next activity	4
	Guiding the teacher	2
	Achieving the outcomes	2
	Time management	1

Teachers’ views on the importance of classroom transitions were examined in terms of teacher, child, and curriculum. As shown in Table 5, the teachers expressed the importance of planning transitions for teacher in terms of “classroom management”, “time management”, “prevention of problem behaviors”, and “sticking to the plan”. The importance for child was stated as “adaptation to the activities”, “the child feeling safe”, “achieving the activity objective”, and “social skill development”. Their views on the importance of transitions for curriculum included “classroom management”, “adaptation to the next activity”, “guiding the teacher”, “achieving the outcomes”, and “time management”. The teachers delivered their views on the importance of classroom transitions as follows:

T5: “Therefore, the child doesn’t suddenly become stunned. Going from an arts activity to a game activity like this, they don’t say, ‘What is this?’. That’s, they learn about the next activity. Thus, it becomes easier for the child to adapt to the activity.”

T6: “Frankly speaking, the disciplinary order and classroom management become easier for us, as they don’t get disconnected and they know what to do. In this way, moving from one to another is easier.”

T10: “Sometimes it prevents loss of time. Group coordination can be more successful.”

T13: “The child also likes school more. Um, they adapt to the activities more easily.”

T14: “It’s important for time management and classroom management. We allocate more time to more educational activities for children. In terms of the program, it actually guides us. I’ll mention the time issue again. It shows us how we should use the time. Keeping these transitions short shows how much more productive we can be for children. Or let me say, ‘how much more planned and programmed.’”

Table 6. Strategies used by teachers in classroom transitions

Category	Code	f
Auditory strategies	Song-music	16
	Fingerplay-nursery rhyme	11
	Verbal reminder	4
	Bell-whistle-tambourine	1
Visual strategies	Image-object-photo	3
	Puppet	3
Positive classroom management practices	Play	3
	Drama	3

Table 7. Strategies used by teachers in classroom transitions (Findings from observation)

Category	Code	f
Auditory strategies	Song-music	12
	Fingerplay-nursery rhyme	4
	Verbal reminder	2
	Bell-whistle-tambourine	1
Visual strategies	Puppet	2
Positive classroom management practices	Organizing the classroom	1

Table 6 presents the findings obtained from the interviews with the teachers. As shown in 6, the teachers mostly used auditory classroom transition strategies such as “song-music”, “fingerplay-nursery rhyme”, “verbal reminder”, and “bell-whistle-tambourine”. They were followed by visual strategies such as “image-object-photo” and “puppet” and strategies for positive classroom management practices such as “play” and “drama”. As seen in Table 7, the findings obtained from the observation support the interview findings. Observations in the classrooms of three teachers revealed that they used transition strategies such as verbal reminders, fingerplay-nursery rhyme, song-music, and bell-whistle-tambourine. According to the findings obtained from the observations, the teachers used verbal reminders more than they stated in the interviews. The teachers made the following statements about the strategies they used in classroom transitions:

T2: “I may be using a material. It may be a verbal instruction song, as I said.”

T7: “In general, poetry, riddles, fingerplays, and music, as I said...”

T16: “We sing nursery rhymes, little songs. For example, we have separate songs for the game, sometimes we have small songs, such as the song about taking turns, the song about transition to reading and writing. We always do it like that. For example, if I have a plan about an animal, I say during that day, ‘let’s line up by pretending to be an animal’. Little games like ‘let’s go to the ring’, ‘let’s go to this line’, ‘let’s stand there.’”

Table 8. Transition times when teachers have problems

Category	Code	f
Transition times when teachers have problems	Transition from free time to the next activity	8
	Transition to reading-writing preparation activity	4
	Transition from active to passive activity	3
	Transition to mealtime	2
	Space transitions	1

Table 8 shows the transition times when the preschool teachers encountered problems. According to the table, the teachers faced the most problems in transition from free time to the next activity, which was followed by transition to reading-writing preparation, transition from active to passive activity, transition to mealtime, and space transitions, respectively. The teachers expressed the transition times when they had more problems as follows:

T2: “It can be a little more difficult to recover the children when moving from free time to other activities. I mean, there’re a lot of stimuli, a lot of materials, everything is there, and children are required to do something, and sometimes they may resent because they do not want to do it.”

T4: “Recovering time, from free time.”

T6: “Of course, children don’t want to get back from playtime.”

T7: “In general, from free time activities to nutrition activities. From a play activity to a reading-writing activity.”

T8: “It may be more difficult for some children to move from active activities to more quiet activities, like preparation for reading-writing.”

T15: “Of course, if we’re to end the activity in a very active moment and move on to listening and focusing activities, the child has difficulty transitioning from that mood to another as their body has worked hard, their heart rate has increased, and their blood circulation has accelerated.”

T10: “We had difficulty transitioning from active activities to quiet activities. There were situations that we had to go through in order to collect their attention, to direct their attention to the activity.”

Table 9. Problems faced by teachers during transition times

Category	Code	f
Individual characteristics	Daily situations (not getting enough sleep, not wanting to come to school, not wanting to eat, etc.)	8
	Small age group/mixed age	3
	Status of having special needs	1
Not wanting to pause the activity	Not wanting to stop playing/not wanting to pause an ongoing activity	5
Physical characteristics of the classroom	Problem behaviors due to large class size/small class size	3
No problem	No problem	1

Table 10. Problems faced by teachers during transition times (Findings from observation)

Category	Code	f
Problems experienced during transition times	Whining	4
	Not participating in the transition	3
	Objecting	2
	Crying	1
	Kicking about	1
	No problem	1

Table 9 examines the problems teachers experienced during transition periods. When table 9 is examined, it is seen that they mostly experienced problems arising from the individual characteristics of children, such as “daily situations”, “age group”, and “status of having special needs”. When the findings obtained from the observation are examined according to Table 10 teachers mostly faced problems of whining and not participating in transition.

T2: *“Since I’m a teacher of three-year-olds, we have a little bit of trouble with students’ taking instructions.”*

T6: *“Children may not be able to keep up with these transitions. More precisely, the majority of them adapt, but we experience this problem more in children with behavioral problems.”*

T7: *“When our free time activity is over, children don’t want to collect toys, of course.”*

T8: *“I talked about our physical conditions. We can only use that space in the classroom, and we usually have more than 20 children.”*

Table 11. Teachers’ suggestions for solutions to the problems experienced during transition times

Category	Code	f
Planning transitions	Giving instructions/getting attention/using materials	7
	Adjusting the active/passive balance of activities	2
	Specifying the daily flow	1
Building support	Support staff	3
	Peer support	1
Planning transitions based on individual needs	Getting to know the child	2

In view of the problems they encountered, the teachers offered various solutions for planning transitions. The teachers stated that solutions such as “giving instructions/getting attention/using materials”, “specifying the daily flow”, “support staff”, “peer support”, “adjusting the active/passive balance of activities”, and “getting to know the child” would reduce the problems experienced during transitions. The teachers expressed their views as follows:

T3: *“For example, I’ll do an activity, but one of them doesn’t want to do it. They aren’t in a good mood, they’re sick. We need to understand that first.”*

T6: *“If we’re getting back, we stop the music. We create a quieter environment and help different children gain awareness. Then we remind again why we need to get back.”*

T10: *“They have an idea about the flow of the day. Sometimes they even say, ‘The first game today is...’, ‘We have not played that game for a long time (they’re familiar with that game now)’, ‘let’s do this in attention-collecting activities’”.*

T13: *“The support staff is very effective. When one child has a problem, the other teacher deals with the children in general.”*

T14: *“As I said, the solution is to arouse their curiosity, to approach them with a gesture that they will feel safe, to utter sentences with such a tone of voice.”*

T15: *“Well, a puppet can be used, again. A question can be used... Before a mother tongue activity, any object can be in a surprise bag or in a box. It could even be a flower.”*

Table 12. Time spent on transitions during the half-day education period

Time spent on transitions during the half-day education period (Interview)		Time spent on transitions during the half-day education period (Observation-two-hour education period)	
	f		f
1-15 mins (12%)	4	1-15 mins (12%)	4
16-30 mins (25%)	8	16-30 mins (25%)	8
31-45 mins (36%)	3	31-45 mins (36%)	3
46-60 mins (50%)	2	46-60 mins (50%)	2

The time the preschool teachers spent on transitions during the half-day education period mostly varied between “16-30 mins”. This is followed by “1-15 mins”, “31-45 mins”, and “46-60 mins”. The data obtained from the observations in Table 12, it is seen that the transitions take “1-15 mins” (12%) in a two-hour period.

T4: *“I think, maximum half an hour.”*

T12: *“I mean, if we do four activities a day, it varies between 30 and 40 minutes a day on average.”*

T15: *“It may depend on the number of activities, but transition from one activity to another may take 15 minutes.”*

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

This study examined preschool teachers’ views on classroom transitions and their use and planning of classroom transition activities. Olive (2004) defines classroom transition as a transition between regularly scheduled activities, and Banerjee and Horn (2013) define it as “a teacher-initiated movement from one ongoing classroom activity to another resulting in a change in the activity during a daily routine”. Transitions in early childhood settings are times when children move from one activity to another (Hemmeter et al., 2008). Transitions refer to individuals ending one activity and starting something new and moving from one position to another (Hume, 2008). The teachers participating in the present study described transitions as “transitions between activities”, “work that prevents disconnection between activities”, “preparing children for the next activity”, “facilitating the transition to the next activity”, and “linking activities together”. The teachers expressed views similar to the definitions of classroom transitions in the literature, which shows that the preschool teachers have knowledge about classroom transitions.

All the teachers participating in the study stated that they included classroom transitions in their processes and expressed the importance of classroom transitions in terms of “teacher”, “child”, and “curriculum”. These findings are consistent with the research findings in the literature. Previous research has shown that transition times can create problems for teachers and students even in a well-planned classroom environment, and therefore it is useful to plan classroom transition times, since problem behaviors are likely to come out during transition times (McIntosh, Herman, Sanford, McGraw & Florence, 2004; Olive, 2004). The preschool teachers participating in this study put the most emphasis on classroom management in terms of the curriculum and teacher. One aspect of classroom management involves transitions. During a five-hour preschool education period, children may spend an hour or more in transitions between activities (Banerjee & Horn, 2013). Ineffective classroom transitions lead to wasted time and increased problem behaviors (Russo, 2014). The findings of the present study on children’s adaptation to the activities and feeling safe are in line with the findings in the literature. If children are unsure of what they are expected to do during transition times, there is a greater chance of unmet expectations, and this increases the potential for behavior problems (Mathews, 2012). When children know what to expect, they are better prepared for change and less afraid of the unknown. When children feel safe, they are more involved in play experiences, and their learning potential increases

(Beban & McCormilla, 2012). In addition, in the study conducted by Korkmaz et al. (2018) on pre-service teachers, the pre-service teachers stated that in-class transitions are important for children to prepare for the next activity and not experience confusion. In the present study, the teachers expressed their view that it is important to plan transitions both to ensure classroom management and to increase children's participation in learning activities by making them feel safe.

The teachers indicated their considerations when planning classroom transitions in terms of "individual characteristics", "curriculum", and "physical condition of the classroom". Research shows that the strategies used in transitions should be appropriate to the individual characteristics of children. For example, some children may need support with transitions due to their age and cultural and linguistic characteristics. It is, therefore, very important to adapt transitions to the individual needs of children (Ostrosky et al., 2002). In terms of the curriculum, the teachers paid most attention to balancing active and passive activities. One of the features of Türkiye's 2013 Preschool Education Curriculum is balance. The curriculum highlights ensuring balance between passive and active activities (MoNE, in Turkish MEB, 2013). Banerjee and Horn (2013) also emphasize that having quiet activities before boisterous activities has a positive effect on transitions.

The study found that the teachers used "auditory strategies" the most. Previous studies also show that in-service and pre-service teachers use auditory strategies the most (Bakkaloğlu & Ergin, 2020; Korkmaz et al., 2018). Studies in the literature report that pre-service teachers mostly use verbal reminder, fingerplay-nursery rhyme, and song and musical instrument as auditory strategies in classroom transitions in teaching practice (Korkmaz et al., 2018). Moreover, it is stated that songs indicating what children will do in transitions are effective in attracting children's attention and making them fulfill the expected task. It is emphasized that songs and music are enjoyable and motivating for young children and have a profound effect, especially on children with special needs (Mathews, 2012). Teachers are thought to use auditory strategies more in transition activities because of these reasons. The teachers participating in the study had the most problems in transitioning from free time activities to the next activities. In the study of Yıldırım-Hacıbrahimoğulları (2017), teachers stated that they had the most problems in transitioning from free time activities to other activities. Bakkaloğlu & Ergin (2020) revealed that there were problems in the transition to the eating routine, the transition to the activity after eating, and space transitions. Considering the free time and eating times, teachers may have problems as preparation and recovery are time-consuming for children. On the other hand, the teachers had problems with preparation for reading-writing, transition from active activity to passive activity, and space transitions.

The teachers stated that they experienced problems during transitions due to "individual characteristics", "children not wanting to pause the activity", and "physical characteristics of the classroom". Previous studies consider individual characteristics such as children having special needs, refusing to participate in transition, and having distractibility as problems in transitions (Hemmeter et al., 2008; Korkmaz et al., 2018; Yıldırım-Hacıbrahimoğulları, 2017). In the case of problems arising from children with special needs, teachers should provide additional support in accordance with their needs. Furthermore, children sometimes do not want to participate in transition and show problem behaviors as they do not want to end the activity they are on. Teachers may think that they are having a bad day as they do not know why children exhibit problem behaviors. Therefore, teachers' getting to know the children and offering them various adaptations and supports in line with their needs may reduce the problems they will face in transition. The solution suggestions expressed by the teachers for these problems seem to be related to planning transitions. The literature stresses that teachers' not planning transition times increases the likelihood of problems. Planning transitions ensures that all components of transitions are considered. Teachers should plan which staff will be where, which children will be paired, and which materials will be used during transitions (Olive, 2004). Environmental supports, adapting materials, taking children's preferences into account, and providing peer and staff support are among the aids that teachers can use to facilitate transitions (Banerjee & Horn, 2013). On the other hand, the participating teachers stated that they experienced problems because children did not want to leave their activities unfinished. However, the teachers did not propose solutions for unfinished activities. According to Hume (2008), a completed/to-be-completed activity box is an area where children leave their activities when transition time comes. Having such an area for children to put their

activities when it is time to transition shortens the time spent in transition and allows children to complete their activities later. It is a relief for children that they can finish their activities later.

As to the time spent by the teachers on transitions, they stated that they spent 25% of the half-day education time (16-30 mins) on it. The findings obtained from the observation showed that the teachers spent an average of 1-15 mins (12%) of the 2-hour education period. According to a study conducted in preschool classrooms involving inclusion practices, teachers spend an average of 42 minutes (35%) in a two-hour period of a school day (Bakkaloğlu & Ergin, 2020). The findings obtained from the present study regarding the time spent in transitions differ from the findings of Bakkaloğlu & Ergin (2020). This may be because there were no inclusion students in the preschool education classrooms where the observations were made, the classrooms had support staff, and the physical characteristics of the classrooms were favorable. Determining the time spent in classroom transitions through observations to be made in each teacher's classroom may provide more detailed information.

Some suggestions can be offered in the light of the results obtained from this research. This research is limited to 17 participants due to the nature of qualitative research. A larger study group may provide more in-depth information. Data were collected through interviews and observations. To support the findings of interviews and observations, future studies can analyze teachers' activity plans to obtain information about their planning of classroom transition activities. The study found that the teachers had knowledge about classroom transitions but did not plan them thoroughly. Thus, with training to be provided on this subject, teachers can be supported to increase their level of knowledge and practice. Within the scope of the compulsory courses in teacher training programs, steps can be taken to address the subject of transitions in detail and for practicing students to plan transitions.

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