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The Influence of Pre-school Literacy Preparation Studies on Primary School Literacy Instruction

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The aim of this study is to determine the impact of literacy preparation activities conducted during the pre-school period on primary school literacy instruction from the perspective of classroom teachers. The design of the study was determined as a case study, which is one of the qualitative research types. The research group was determined through purposive sampling. In order to ensure maximum diversity, interviews were conducted with a total of 14 teachers, consisting of one male and one female from each of Türkiye seven regions. Considering the aim of the study, it was taken into account that teachers should have experience in literacy instruction. Therefore, teachers who had conducted teaching activities in first grade elementary school classrooms for at least three times were included in the study. A semi-structured interview form was used as the data collection tool in the research. The interviews were analyzed using a data analysis software. As a result of the analyses, 4 themes, 13 categories, and 58 codes were identified. According to the findings of the study, the teachers believe that literacy preparation activities conducted during the pre-school period have a positive impact on primary school. It is also among the general opinions of those teachers that literacy preparation activities are more effective and functional in pre-school compared to previous years. The classroom teachers expressed that pre-school teachers should not deviate from the curriculum, and teaching literacy in pre-school may lead to some difficulties in primary school. Finally, the classroom teachers believe that beyond academic skills, imparting social adjustment and self-regulation skills to children during pre-school is more crucial for readiness in primary school.

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Introduction

In recent years, the results of studies on the contribution of pre-school education to the development of children have contributed to the awareness of societies on this issue (Özen Altınkaynak, 2019). Many studies reveal that there are significant differences in terms of adaptation to primary school and academic success between children who receive pre-school education and those who do not (Bozgün, Uluçınar & Sağır, 2018; Erkan & Kırca, 2010; Kaytaç, 2005; Minifoğlu & Işık Gürşimsek, 2023; Parlakyıldız, 2014; Yeşil Dağlı, 2013). For this reason, it seems that the main purpose of pre-school education is not only to develop them according to their age characteristics, but also to prepare them for primary school (MoNE, 2013).

Various studies are carried out pre-school in terms of preparation for primary school. The most important of these are literacy preparation activities (Yılmaz Bolat, 2019). These activities are an important preliminary preparation for the literacy gains that children will encounter in primary school (Neumen & Dickinson, 2018) and are very effective. As a matter of fact, many studies on this subject reveal that children who acquire early literacy skills in the pre-school period acquire better reading and writing skills in primary school and become better literate in later periods (Barnett et al, 2013; Cabell et al, 2010; Deretarla Gül, 2004; Dickinson & Caswell, 2007; Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Esaspehlivan, 2006; Jalongo, 2013; Kent et al., 2014; Kim, Al Otaiba & Wanzek, 2015; Kleeck & Schuele, 2010; Morton, 2014; Nation et al, 2010; Neuman & Dickinson, 2018; Niklas & Schneider, 2017; Piasta et al, 2012; Pinto, 2012; Spira, Bracken & Fischel, 2005; Whitehead, 2007; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

The early literacy skills incorporated into pre-school curriculum encompass a range of areas, including general knowledge, oral language proficiency, alphabet familiarity, writing awareness, phonological awareness, and pre-writing activities (Karaman, 2014; MoNE, 2013; Uyanık & Kandır, 2010). Preparatory activities for reading and writing entail various tasks aimed at enhancing attention and memory, supporting visual and auditory perception, teaching concepts, enriching vocabulary, fostering self-expression, improving hand-eye coordination, and developing pencil skills. Furthermore, activities such as rhythm exercises, breathing exercises, matching, sorting, grouping, reasoning, and problem-solving are integral components of literacy preparation (Aral & Can Yaşar, 2018; MoNE, 2013; Megep, 2007).

Skills such as understanding how to read a book, turning pages, recognizing the left-to-right reading direction, summarizing what they hear, and discerning similarities and differences between pictures or shapes, which are developed by children as part of preparatory activities for reading and writing, are crucial for ensuring that children enter primary school adequately prepared (Güneş, 2000). These activities, aimed at enhancing children's readiness for the transition to primary school (Bayraktar & Temel, 2015; Oğuzkan & Oral, 1983; Taşkın, Sak & Şahin Sak, 2014), play a pivotal role in facilitating children's initial encounters with literacy (Çabuk, Baş & Teke, 202; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Particularly for children residing in disadvantaged circumstances, these activities hold even greater significance.

Upon reviewing the literature, it becomes evident that there is a notable conceptual confusion regarding the scope and quality of literacy preparation studies in Turkey. For instance, Tuğluk et al. (2008) discovered in their study that teachers grappled with conceptual ambiguity concerning literacy preparation activities and were uncertain about which studies fell within

this domain. Additionally, some studies revealed that teachers lacked comprehensive understanding of the concept of early literacy or early literacy skills, often equating it solely with the ability to read and write before entering primary school (Altun & Tantekin Erden, 2016; Ergül et al., 2014; Özdemir & Bayraktar, 2015). These findings are corroborated by other studies as well (Parlakıyıldız & Yıldızbaş, 2004). Concurrently, there are instances where institutions or teachers opt to teach children to read and write before formal schooling (Eminoğlu & Tanrıkulu, 2018).

Preparation for literacy is not teaching children to read and write but preparing them for the literacy process by taking into account their developmental characteristics (Erdoğan, 2013; MoNE, 2013; Taşkın, Sak & Şahin Sak, 2015; Yılmaz Bolat, 2019). Overstepping preparation and directly teaching reading and writing can lead to various challenges for classroom teachers. Başar (2013) found in a study that children who developed incorrect pencil-holding habits during pre-school were adversely affected in their initial reading and writing endeavors. Similarly, Taşkın et al. (2015) reported that classroom teachers involved in their study were hesitant about teaching reading and writing before formal schooling, as rectifying misconceptions acquired during pre-school proved to be arduous for both students and educators (Bay & Şimşek Çetin, 2014; Bozgün & Uluçınar Sağır, 2018; Yapıcı & Ulu, 2010). Conversely, Kılıç et al. (2021) concluded in their research that reading and writing preparation activities were the least favored, implemented, and perceived as successful by teachers. These findings underscore the imperative to critically reassess literacy preparation practices.

Upon reviewing the literature on the topic, it was observed that the majority of the studies focused on the impact of family support and home-based programs in literacy preparation (Coşkun & Deniz, 2019; Ertürk Kara, 2019; Eva, Lau & Nirmala, 201; Haktanır, 2021; Hofslundsengen, Gustafsson & Eriksen, 2018; Guo, et al., 2020; Niklas & Schneider, 2017; Özen Altınkaynak & Akman, 2016; Simmons et al., 2023; Yılmaz Bolat & Dal, 2007). Other studies addressed the effects of literacy preparation on literacy skills (Çabuk, Baş & Teke, 2021), competencies of teachers/teacher candidates in literacy preparation studies (Bay & Alisinanoğlu, 2012; Erbaş, 2021; Çabuk, 2014), opinions of teachers/parents regarding pre-school literacy (Akbaba Altun et al., 2014; Deretarla Gül & Bal, 2006; Dönmezler, 2016; Şenol, 2021; Özen Altınkaynak, 2019; Yılmaz Bolat, 2019; Yılmaz Bolat & Dal, 2017), effects of literacy preparation activities on various variables (Alisinanoğlu & Şimşek, 2012; Bayraktar & Temel, 2014; Dereobalı, 2016), teachers' practices regarding literacy preparation activities (Coşkun & Deniz, 2017; Erdoğan, Özen Altınkaynak & Erdoğan, 2013; Lynch, 2009), and in-service training related to early literacy skills (Dickinson & Caswell, 2007).

In this study, the effects of pre-school literacy preparation activities on primary school literacy instruction were investigated through interviews conducted with a total of 14 classroom teachers, two from each of the seven different regions of Turkey. The execution of the study with 14 class teachers, consisting of one female and one male from each of Turkey's seven geographical regions, and the conduct of comprehensive and in-depth interviews distinguish this study. In this context, it is considered significant for the results of this study to provide feedback to pre-school teachers and stakeholders regarding literacy preparation activities, to contribute to resolving conceptual confusion in the field, and to contribute to the relevant literature.



Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to determine the effects of literacy preparation activities conducted during the pre-school period on primary school literacy instruction from the perspective of classroom teachers. In line with this main objective, the following questions were addressed:

- (1) How are the opinions of classroom teachers regarding literacy preparation activities conducted during the pre-school period?
- (2) What are the expectations of classroom teachers from pre-school teachers regarding literacy preparation?

Methodology

This research was designed using a basic qualitative research method to determine the opinions of classroom teachers regarding literacy preparation activities. Qualitative research focuses on characteristics such as words or observations that are difficult to measure and involves in-depth analysis and interpretation of these characteristics.

Qualitative research allows for a clearer understanding of attitudes and perceptions (Glesne, 2016). The design of the study was determined as a case study, which is one of the qualitative research types. A case study is a preferred method for understanding, describing, and interpreting factors related to a current situation, where the researcher does not have control over the variables (Ozan Leymun, Odabaşı & Kabakçı, 2017). According to Creswell (2014), a case study is a research method where data obtained from one or more sources (interviews, documents, observations, reports, etc.) are meticulously examined.

Study group

The study group was determined using purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling allows for the identification of participants who would provide the maximum amount of data relevant to the research aim (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). When determining the study group, care was taken to ensure maximum diversity among the participants. The primary goal in achieving maximum diversity is to identify common phenomena within differing contexts to ascertain the various dimensions of the problem (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In this context, the study group consisted of a total of 14 classroom teachers, with one male and one female participant from each of Turkey's seven geographical regions. Participants were selected based on voluntary participation. In line with the aim of the study, participants were chosen to have experience in literacy instruction. Therefore, teachers who had taught first grade elementary school at least three times were included in the study. Descriptive information about the study group is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive information about the study group

Participant information	Gender	Region of work	Years of experience
T1	Female	Aegean Region	14
T2	Male	Black Sea Anatolia Region	16
T3	Female	Black Sea Anatolia Region	12
T4	Female	Central Anatolia Region	8
T5	Male	Central Anatolia Region	21
T6	Female	Southeastern Anatolia Region	13
T7	Female	Marmara Region	15
T8	Male	Marmara Region	14
T9	Female	Eastern Anatolia Region	18
T10	Male	Aegean Region	16
T11	Male	The Mediterranean Region	12
T12	Female	The Mediterranean Region	15
T13	Male	Eastern Anatolia Region	19
T14	Male	Southeastern Anatolia Region	12

Data collection tool

The data collection tool used in the study was a semi-structured interview form. Before preparing the interview questions, relevant literature review was conducted, and a pool of questions was created. Draft questions underwent revisions based on feedback and suggestions from three pre-school teachers, three classroom teachers, and two academic experts in the field. Subsequently, the interview form was then subjected to ethical approval procedures. The necessary approval was obtained with the decision of Uşak University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee dated 08.02.2024 and numbered 2024-38.

Process of data collection

The data were obtained through interviews conducted with teachers serving in different regions of Turkey. Therefore, the interviews were conducted using various audio-visual programs over the internet. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the teachers. Prior to the interviews, a preliminary meeting was held with each participant. During this preliminary meeting, participants were informed that the interview recordings would be used solely for scientific research purposes and their identity information would not be disclosed. It was also explained that the interview would last between 30 to 45 minutes, and appointments were scheduled at the most convenient time for them. The semi-structured interview form was shared with the participants before the interview, allowing them time to reflect on the topic before the interview day. Additionally, teachers were assured that the interview was not limited to the provided questions, and they were encouraged to express any additional thoughts they had beyond the scope of the questions. Throughout the interview process, efforts were made to create a sincere and comfortable atmosphere to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data.

Data analysis

The data obtained from the interviews were first transcribed and then subjected to content analysis. Content analysis involves identifying themes within the data collected by the researcher, analyzing them, and then reporting the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In content analysis, data that exhibit similarities are initially grouped under different themes and codes, and then they are organized and interpreted in a clear manner for the reader (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). To ensure that the data were systematically and meaningfully categorized under appropriate themes and codes, the “Dedoose” data analysis program was utilized in this process. The resulting themes were shared through tables and enriched by providing direct expressions supporting the categories and codes. The 14 participants in the study group were given aliases such as T1, T2, and so on.

Validity and reliability

During the process of preparing the interview forms, feedback was obtained from two academic experts specializing in the fields of classroom and pre-school education, and the forms were revised according to their recommendations. In qualitative research, the concept of reliability refers to the ability to reach the same findings with the same participant group in the same context (Shenton, 2004). In this study, all data obtained were independently analyzed by both researchers. Any differences in opinions were addressed through continued content analysis until a consensus was reached, following the approach suggested by Erlandson et al. (1993). In cases where a consensus could not be reached, participant approval was sought. Participant approval involves directly contacting the individuals who provided the data to confirm the existing information. This practice reduces the possibility of misinterpreting or misrepresenting the data (Maxwell, 2008).

Findings and interpretations

This section presents the findings obtained from the interviews with teachers. Based on the results of the interviews, themes and codes were identified. The findings obtained are presented in accordance with the research questions.

Findings regarding pre-school literacy preparation activities

The first question of the research was “What are the opinions of classroom teachers regarding the pre-school literacy preparation activities?” The analysis of teacher opinions on this question resulted in the identification of four themes. The themes identified according to teachers' views are presented in the figure below.

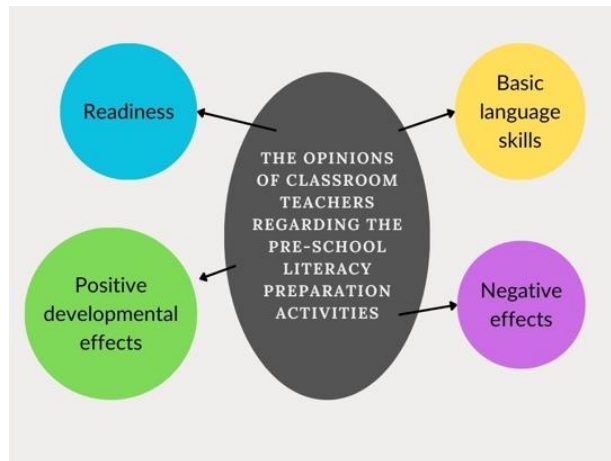


Figure 1. Themes related to literacy preparation activities.

As can be seen in the Figure 1, the themes that emerged from the opinions of the teachers in the study group were determined as “Readiness, Basic Language Skills, Positive Developmental Effects and Negative Effects”. Based on the teachers’ opinions, the first emerged theme was identified to be related to readiness for literacy. The findings regarding this theme are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Information on the readiness theme

Category	Code	f	Teachers Expressing Views
Academic Preparation	Early literacy skills	8	T2, T4, T6, T7, T8, T11, T12, T13
	Easily adapting to reading and writing studies	6	T2, T3, T6, T11, T12, T14
Psychosocial Preparation	Raising awareness on starting primary school	2	T8, T12
	Developing a positive attitude towards reading and writing	5	T3, T8, T9, T10, T13
	Motivation	3	T2, T4, T14

In the “Academic Preparation” category of the readiness theme, teachers stated that reading and writing preparation activities contributed most to early literacy skills. Process; **T2** “I see that children acquire many basic skills when they start the first grade. In fact, the reading and writing preparation activities carried out pre-school prepare them for school.” and **T8** “Pre-school children know how to hold a pencil and do not have much difficulty in writing letters because they do line studies. Nowadays, not many children who do not receive pre-school education come, and most of them are gone, which is an advantage for us.” They expressed it as follows.

In the “Psychosocial preparation” category of the readiness theme, teachers stated that children who carried out reading and writing preparation activities adapted more easily to both school and lessons. This situation was explained by **T12**: “Although the environment for children is different from the kindergarten, they do not feel strange because the studies they do at first are almost the same as the ones they did pre-school.” and **T14** “The work we do in the first days seems simple to children. In fact, children who we never had any problems with until it got difficult start whining when the situation changed. Of course, it is always easy to do what you know.” they expressed it as follows.

Table 3. Findings regarding the theme of basic language skills

Category	Code	Teachers Expressing Views
Effects on Writing Skills	Holding the pencil correctly	T1, T2, T3, T5, T7, T8, T11, T12, T14
	Ability to provide hand eye coordination	T1, T2, T3, T4, T7, T13
	Ability to follow lines	T1, T4, T6, T10, T13
	Contributing to fine muscle development	T2, T8, T9, T14
	Writing letters appropriately and beautifully	T4, T5, T8, T10
	Making writing easier	T2, T8, T14
	Writing at expected speed	T3, T4, T9
Effects on Reading Skills	Paying more attention to page cleanliness	T1, T10, T12
	Acquiring the ability to distinguish sounds	T1, T2, T6, T8, T10, T11, T13, T14
	Making it easier to read sounds/letters	T2, T5, T8, T9, T11, T12, T14
	High reading speed	T1, T6, T11
	Making fewer mistakes in reading	T5, T7, T11
	Using reading voice correctly	T2, T3, T6
	Instilling a love of reading books	T2, T6, T11
	Success in adding and separating syllables	T1, T9, T11
	Paying attention to the book	T2, T7, T12
	Effects on Listening Skills	Following the instructions
Being patient while listening		T3, T4, T8, T9, T10
Gaining listening comprehension skills		T1, T5, T6, T9
Rephrase to listening		T2, T4, T5
Effects on Speaking Skills	Expressing him/herself	T1, T2, T5, T7, T8, T11, T12, T13,
	Increasing vocabulary	T1, T3, T4, T10, T1, T12
	Contribution to language development	T2, T5, T8, T10, T11
	Using Turkish correctly	T6, T8, T11
	Ability to make different interpretations of what they read	T2, T4

Findings regarding the “basic language skills” theme are divided into four categories: writing-reading-listening-speaking. Findings have been obtained that the reading and writing preparation studies carried out in the pre-school period mostly gained the skill of holding the pencil correctly in the “Writing Skills” category. Some of the opinions received from teachers on this subject are as follows. **T2** “I have been doing this job for 16 years. Especially in the first years of my career, children who did not receive pre-school education were very difficult for us, and there were children who did not even know how to hold a pencil. Although it seems like a simple acquisition, a child who does not hold the pencil correctly cannot write correctly, so it took a long time to teach this, now most of the children come knowing how to hold the pencil correctly.” **T5** “At least the children know how to hold a pencil.” In another skill, “Reading Skill”, teachers’ opinions are mostly united on the point that children gain the ability to distinguish sounds. **T1** “The biggest challenge of the first grade is to teach children to distinguish sounds from each other. “When he mixes the sounds together, he cannot read. The pre-school curriculum includes teaching sound-based words to children. If the child is taught by a teacher who does this properly, the transition to reading and writing becomes easier.” he expressed it as follows.

Another skill is “Listening Skill” in this category, teachers mostly stated that children did not have difficulty in following the instructions. **T6** “The most basic key to being successful in primary school is knowing how to listen. Children, due to their nature, can listen for very short periods of time, but if they can follow and apply the instructions correctly in the first place, I do not focus on their listening for very long periods of time, so there are conversations in my classroom. “It is not possible to expect great silence from them, but it is important that they understand and implement what is said.” He expressed it as follows.

In the last skill, “Speaking Skill”, teachers; The most common finding was that children who received reading and writing preparation activities pre-school had high self-expression skills. **T11** “Actually, the child does not feel strange because he has done similar studies before. Children love to tell and explain things they know. When asked a question, he answers without fear. “He has no difficulty expressing himself while speaking.” he expressed it as follows.

Table 4. Positive effects in terms of developmental aspects

Category	Code	f	Teachers Views	Expressing
Contributions to Cognitive Development	Reinforcing existing knowledge	8	T1, T2, T4, T6, T7, T9, T10, T11	
	Accelerating comprehension	6	T1, T3, T4, T5, T8, T10	
	Increased attention span	5	T2, T5, T7, T12, T13	
	Increasing thinking and decision-making skills	4	T3, T4, T9, T11	
	Increasing interest in learning	2	T6, T11	
Contributions to Social-Emotional Development	Establishing a closer relationship with the teacher	5	T3, T6, T7, T14	
	Motivating other students	4	T3, T6, T9, T13	
	Positive communication with peers	3	T1, T6, T9, T10, T11	
Contributions to Personality Development	Developing discipline	7	T1, T3, T7, T9, T12, T13	
	Increasing self-confidence	6	T1, T5, T6, T8, T13, T14	
	Elimination of dependence on parents for literacy	4	T2, T6, T9, T12	

In pre-school, the positive contributions of preparatory literacy activities have been categorized into four distinct categories. The first of these is the contributions to the child’s cognitive development. A noteworthy finding in this category is the reinforcement of existing knowledge. Eight teachers emphasized similar points regarding this finding. **T7** states, “Especially in the first two months of primary school, children use expressions like ‘we know this, we did this in kindergarten,’ which draws my attention. Of course, this enables children to adapt to school easily. Activities such as drawing, sound exercises, or activities related to numbers are just a reinforcement for children.”

Another dimension of the positive contributions is to social-emotional development. In this category, teachers have mostly highlighted the concept of establishing a closer relationship with the teacher. **T1** says, “We talked about the same thing in the department meeting; we talked about children receiving pre-school education, but if we talk about it in terms of preparatory literacy activities the same positive results emerge in both. Since the child knows, they become confident, they are not afraid to speak, they know the sounds, numbers, syllables, and some even know how to read and write, so inevitably, there is always a positive communication between us and the child, where his success is reinforced.”

Another category believed to be supported by preparatory literacy activities is personality development. Teachers have mostly mentioned the contributions of preparatory literacy activities to the development of discipline in this regard. **T13** says, “What I’m going to say is very related to how a teacher teaches pre-school education. For example, in a pre-school education classroom where preparatory literacy activities are frequently conducted, children can sit in line properly, use notebooks and books cleanly, listen to the teacher properly, and even feel responsible for their homework. An inner discipline is formed in children. In short, the child knows what is expected of him. However, we unfortunately see examples where only random activities are conducted without discipline.”

Table 5. Findings on negative effects theme

Category	Code	f	Teachers Expressing Views
Academic Difficulties	Difficulty in correcting misconceptions	10	T1, T2, T4, T5, T6, T9, T11, T12, T13, T14
	Mispronunciation of sounds	7	T2, T5, T7, T8, T11, T13, T14
	Prior literacy learning	5	T1, T2, T7, T9, T12
	Developing incorrect pencil grip habits	5	T2, T6, T8, T9, T14
	Being different from the pace of the class	4	T2, T6, T8, T14
	Learning the direction and shapes of numbers incorrectly	4	T2, T6, T11, T13
Behavioral Problems	Feeling bored and frustrated in the process	8	T1, T2, T4, T6, T8, T12, T13, T14
	Negatively impacting classroom climate	7	T1, T3, T6, T8, T9, T10, T14
	Disturbance in motivation	4	T3, T4, T9, T12
	Constant desire for learning through play	3	T2, T6, T9

According to the findings obtained on the theme of “Negative Effects” created when preparatory literacy activities are not conducted properly, two sub-categories have been formed. The first of these categories is the academic difficulties experienced during the process. The most striking finding in the category of academic difficulties is the difficulty in correcting misconceptions. The majority of teachers have drawn attention to this issue. **T5**

states, “Although it used to be a more common situation before, we still encounter it occasionally. I don’t want to say anything that would suspect anyone, but most likely, pre-school teachers are not fully taught preparatory literacy activities, I mean, I’m saying it based on my degree. They mostly teach based on letters. When children encounter sentence-based teaching with sound emphasis, they experience a shock, making it difficult to teach them sounds. If they didn’t teach at all, maybe we wouldn’t struggle this much.”

T13: “Especially misconceptions learned in pre-school hinder children from learning the correct ones when they start primary school, it hampers them. Especially letters and numbers are taught very incorrectly, it takes time to correct them.” Another noteworthy point here is children starting primary school already knowing how to read and write. In this regard, **T9** says, “now you might say it’s great if the child knows how to read and write, this is a big advantage for you, but it doesn’t work that way, especially if the majority of the class doesn’t know how to read and write, this process becomes boring and turns into something ordinary for the child. Imagine, you know the apple, but I’m talking to you about the apple for a week, it’s such a feeling. This also leads to behavioral problems, I think when classes are formed in primary school, there should be categories such as those who know how to read and write in one class and those who don’t know in another class because no matter what we do, we cannot prevent learning to read and write before primary school, in this case, even if the contribution of the teachers is great, the contribution of the parents is also great, should I say the contribution? I’m not sure, but that’s why if the whole class knows how to read and write, there will be fewer problems here, now there are mixed classes, for example, my class has 26 children, 14 of them have come by learning to read and write, therefore, it’s a big problem.”

Another category is behavioral problems. Teachers mostly expressed their views on children feeling bored and frustrated during the process. **T2** says, “Actually, this year I teach first graders and I personally went to thank the kindergarten teacher of our school. Because she taught what she needed to teach, she gave the children what they needed without boring them, this is what we actually want, but in previous years, there were children who hated preparatory literacy, hated holding a pencil, and said ‘enough, teacher’ when they saw paper, imagine, I’m teaching the ‘e’ sound in the first weeks of school and the child constantly says to me, ‘Teacher, is it enough? Can I not write? Should I not tell you?’ because they got bored in pre-school, what can I do with this child until the end of the year?”

Findings on expectations from preschool teachers

The second research question of the study was “What are the expectations of classroom teachers from preschool teachers regarding preparations for literacy skills?” Through the analysis of teacher opinions regarding this question, the theme of “expectations from pre-school teachers” emerged. The sub-themes and codes determined based on this theme are presented below.

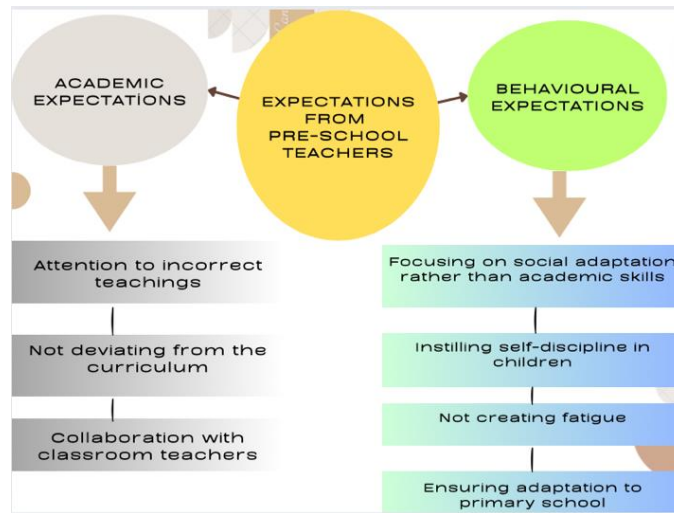


Figure 2. Expectations from preschool teachers.

As seen in Figure 2, the categories derived from this theme were identified as “academic expectations” and “behavioural expectations.” These categories and codes, and the teachers who expressed their views on them, are given in the Table 5.

Table 6. Expectations from pre-school teachers

Category	Code	f	Teachers Expressing Views
Academic Expectations	Attention to incorrect teachings	8	T1, T2, T4, T6, T9, T11, T12, T14
	Not deviating from the curriculum	5	T2, T6, T9, T10, T11
	Collaboration with classroom teachers	4	T5, T7, T12, T13
Behavioral Expectations	Focusing on social adaptation rather than academic skills	4	T2, T3, T8, T7
	Instilling self-discipline in children	4	T2, T3, T9, T11
	Not creating fatigue	3	T1, T12, T13
	Ensuring adaptation to primary school	3	T2, T9, T14

Expectations of classroom teachers from pre-school teachers regarding preparatory literacy activities have been grouped under two categories. The first of these categories is the academic expectations of teachers from pre-school teachers. It is observed that teachers most emphasize the need to pay attention to incorrect teachings. Teachers have expressed their views on this issue as follows: **T6** “Pre-school teachers make the most mistakes when giving sounds; they teach by adding voiced letters next to them, for example, they teach with ‘ke’, ‘be’, ‘ce’, making it very difficult to correct this situation.” **T14** “Is there any handwriting in pre-school, I really don’t know, I haven’t examined the curriculum much, actually this is a bit of our deficiency, both sides need to know the curricula so that it does not repeat, correct learning happens. For example, they teach letters and numbers incorrectly, their directions are wrong, and no matter what we do, we cannot correct this situation, the child cannot change what they learned.” One expectation of teachers is also not to deviate from the curriculum.

T2 “In the first months of first grade, they see everything they see in pre-school and come, so the child gets bored, although the curriculum is not that intense actually, but teachers constantly deviate from the curriculum, perhaps because of the expectations of the

administration or to meet the expectations of the parents, there are very simple and basic preparations when we look, but the teacher treats the children like first grade students.” **T11** supports the same views “I take a share from myself when we graduated from the faculty, we were not very knowledgeable about the curriculum, we developed ourselves within the profession, most likely pre-school students graduate without being very knowledgeable about the curriculum, this situation causes confusion. Because the child encounters a very intense and unnecessary curriculum, then he comes to primary school, and the same thing happens there, so it increases behavioral problems or the child does not want to come to school, the child gets bored.”

Another category of expectations from pre-school teachers for the preparatory activities for literacy development is behavioral expectations. In this regard, teachers have emphasized the importance of focusing on social adaptation rather than academic skills and instilling self-discipline in children. **T1** stated, “I believe that more emphasis should be placed on the social development of the child in preschool. It is easier to teach academic skills to a child who has acquired social skills.” Similarly, **T11** expressed, “One of the most challenging issues for me is the constant search for play and entertainment in preschool. Children should have self-discipline, and we should instill this in them during the preschool period.

Discussion and conclusion

The main objective of this study is to determine the opinions of classroom teachers regarding preparatory activities for reading and writing conducted during the pre-school period. The opinions of classroom teachers regarding preparatory activities for reading and writing during the pre-school period have been categorized under four main themes. These themes are identified as “Readiness, Basic Language Skills, Positive and Negative Effects of the Studies in terms of Development.”

When examining the categories created for the theme of readiness, it is evident from the research results that preparatory activities for reading and writing during the pre-school period contribute to children’s readiness for school, easy adaptation to school, developing a positive attitude towards reading and writing, increasing their motivation, and creating awareness of school before starting primary school. Teachers have stated that children who receive pre-school education can hold a pencil, use notebooks correctly, mostly recognize sounds, and do not have difficulty in writing. Teachers have noted that compared to previous years, the number of students who did not receive pre-school education in the classroom is almost negligible, but those who did not receive education clearly face difficulties in terms of readiness for school, adaptability to school, and motivation. According to a study conducted by Karadağ, Aktan Acar & Erbaş (2023), it was observed that 50% of teachers conducted exercises to hold and use the pencil correctly in fine motor skills studies. In this study, classroom teachers also stated that children who received pre-school education hold the pencil correctly. Minifoğlu & Işık Gürşimşek (2023) stated in their study that preparatory studies for reading and writing increased school adaptation. Yoleri & Tanış (2014) found that preparatory studies for reading and writing increased children’s readiness levels and school adaptation. Pekdoğan (2017) stated in his study that children who received pre-school education started primary school more academically prepared and their school adaptation was easier. Many studies supporting this finding have been encountered in the literature (Bozgün Uluçınar & Sağır, 2018; Ercan & Kırca, 2010; Gür et al., 2023; Parlakyıldız, 2014; Yeşil Dağlı, 2013).



The theme of basic language skills has been examined in four categories. Based on the opinions of teachers, it is understood that preparatory activities for reading and writing contribute to writing skills, reading skills, listening skills, and speaking skills.

When it comes to contributions to writing skills, teachers' opinions indicate that when reading and writing activities are carried out effectively, they contribute to children's ability to hold the pencil correctly, hand-eye coordination, ability to follow lines and rows, contribution to fine motor development, writing letters in appropriate size and beautifully, making it easier to write at the expected speed, and paying more attention to page cleanliness. Minifoğlu & Işık Gürşimşek (2023) reached the conclusion that these studies contributed to the development of pencil holding skills. Akbaba et al. (2014) mentioned their contributions in terms of muscle development and eye coordination.

Regarding contributions to reading skills, it is observed that children who receive education on preparatory activities for reading and writing have high abilities in distinguishing sounds, find it easier to read sounds/letters, have high reading speeds, make fewer mistakes in reading, use their voice tones correctly during reading, have a high interest in reading books, are more successful in adding and separating syllables, and use the book more carefully. Erçakır & Yurdakal (2023) based on the opinions of classroom teachers, stated in their study that students who receive pre-school education gain sound recognition and discrimination skills earlier, thus they acquire reading skills more quickly than other students.

Regarding contributions to listening skills, it is determined that preparatory activities for reading and writing contribute to children in terms of following instructions, being patient while listening, understanding what they listen to, and expressing what they listen to again. In another study supporting the findings of this research, it was concluded that children who receive pre-school education acquire listening skills and start first grade by adhering to listening rules in class (Erçakır & Yurdakal, 2023).

It has been observed that preparatory activities for reading and writing also contribute to speaking skills such as expressing oneself, increasing vocabulary, contributing to language development, using Turkish correctly, and bringing different interpretations to what they read.

In the sub-categories of the theme created for the positive effects of the studies in terms of development, contributions to cognitive development, socio-emotional development, and personality development have been identified. In the cognitive development category, teachers stated that preparatory activities for reading and writing contribute to reinforcement, accelerating comprehension, attention span, thinking, decision-making, and increasing interest in learning.

Regarding contributions to socio-emotional development, teachers stated that preparatory activities for reading and writing have positive effects on establishing closer relationships with teachers, providing motivation to other students, and establishing positive communication with peers. Erçakır & Yurdakal (2023) expressed that children who receive pre-school education are effective in communicating with their peers, are willing to come to school, and have a strong motivation to learn to read and write from the perspective of emotional aspects.

Teachers emphasized the contributions of preparatory activities for reading and writing in terms of personality development in terms of discipline development, increase in self-confidence, and getting rid of dependence on parents for reading and writing. In the study conducted by Gür et al. (2023), classroom teachers expressed that children who receive pre-school education have improved relationships with their friends, can communicate with the teacher without hesitation, and are more social and outgoing.

Although teachers mostly mentioned the positive effects of the studies, they also mentioned some negative effects on children's development. Negative effects are given in two categories as academic difficulties and behavioral problems.

According to the opinions of teachers in the academic difficulties category, preparatory activities for reading and writing carried out in pre-school can sometimes cause children to have difficulty in correcting incorrect learning due to incorrect teaching by teachers, making incorrect sounds, acquiring incorrect pencil holding habits, and learning the directions and shapes of numbers incorrectly. However, it is among the problems observed by teachers that children come to school having learned to read and write as a result of teaching outside the curriculum and therefore differ from the speed of the class. In a study by Yapıcı & Ulu (2010), it was determined that classroom teachers think that preparatory activities for reading and writing are carried out incorrectly. Dereli (2012) similarly stated that classroom teachers expect pre-school teachers to only do line exercises, otherwise, they have difficulty correcting wrong learning in primary school. In their study, Şahin, Sak & Tuncer (2013) concluded that wrong learning negatively affects primary school.

In the category of behavioral problems, it is among the behavioral problems mentioned by teachers that children get bored and bored in the process due to excessive preparatory activities for reading and writing given in the pre-school period, affect the class climate negatively because they get bored or because they know more than their peers, have low motivation, and constantly want to learn through play. Taşkın, Katrancı & Uygun (2013), similarly, found in their research that preparatory activities for reading and writing can lead to students getting bored of school in the pre-school period. Okur (2014) stated in his research that the readiness studies carried out in the pre-school period can make children dependent on the teacher, reduce their motivation for learning, and lead to boredom.

The second sub-objective of the study aims to determine the expectations of classroom teachers from pre-school teachers regarding preparatory activities for reading and writing. In this regard, the situations frequently mentioned by teachers are the lack of attention to incorrect teachings, going beyond the curriculum, not cooperating with classroom teachers, focusing on social adaptation rather than equipping children with academic knowledge, the necessity of ensuring discipline in children contributing to primary school, avoiding activities that will bore children, and increasing preparatory activities for school adaptation.

To evaluate all the results of the study in general; most of the participating teachers believe that preparatory activities for reading and writing during the pre-school period have positive contributions to primary school. Teachers think that preparatory activities for reading and writing are more effective, functional, and facilitate adaptation to primary school compared to previous years. It is emphasized that pre-school teachers should be in cooperation with classroom teachers, not to go beyond the pre-school curriculum, it is necessary to have courses related to reading and writing preparation in undergraduate education, wrong

learnings negatively affect the learning activities of reading and writing in the first grade, it is important to create separate classes for children who can read and write and those who cannot when forming first-grade classes. Moreover, teachers expressed that in pre-school, children should be equipped with social adaptation and self-regulation skills rather than academic skills.

Recommendations

Based on all these findings, the stakeholders of the study are presented with the following recommendations:

- Early literacy and school readiness courses can be offered as elective or compulsory courses in pre-school teacher education programs.
- Practical guides can be prepared to guide teacher candidates and teachers regarding preparatory activities for reading and writing included in the pre-school curriculum.
- The Ministry of National Education can recommend meetings between pre-school and first-grade teachers at the beginning of each academic term.
- Especially, an evaluation form regarding preparatory activities for reading and writing and adaptation to primary school can be prepared. This form, in which teachers take notes of their observations throughout the process, can be sent to the school administration for every child enrolling in primary school. Thus, homogeneous classes suitable for readiness levels can be formed instead of heterogeneous classes.

Limitations

This study is limited to 14 classroom teachers working in seven geographical regions of Turkey. It is important and recommended to conduct the research with different sample groups in order to contribute to the field of the study.

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