Project Naturalistic Teaching

MODULE 1

Naturalistic
Teaching Process

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Naturalistic Teaching Process

Naturalistic teaching is defined as a process that helps the child to gain these goals through the meaningful embedding of the goals aimed for the child in the daily routine and activities of the child. In other words, natural teaching is a process; instructional education, which provides opportunities for all young children with special needs or at risk groups and with normal development to acquire skills and reinforce the acquired skills, and where education is presented in the child's daily natural life (routine, activities and transitions for the school environment, home environment and other natural environments).

Naturalistic Teaching Process

Natural teaching is a process that can be used effectively with all children with and without special needs.

Behavioral and social interaction approaches are the basis of the natural teaching process. Natural teaching process; It is based on the behavioral approach in terms of using natural teaching strategies and techniques in pre behavioral, during and post-behavioral situations, and on social interaction approaches in terms of using the qualified interaction between the child and the adult.

In the natural teaching process, the natural environment in which the child spends time intensively and which is the most meaningful for child is accepted as the teaching environment. The definition of natural environment refers to the school environment where the child with special needs is often with the children with normal development, or the child's own home environment. The daily routines, activities and transitions that occur in these environments are sometimes partially structured by environmental arrangements, and often transformed into unstructured teaching opportunities.

Today, it is seen that the natural teaching process is widely used to support different developmental areas (cognitive and pre-academic skills, language and communication, social and emotional, motor skills) of young children in different disability (delayed language and speech, Autism Spectrum Disorder, intellectual disability, etc.) groups (Boulware, Schwartz, Sandall, & Mcbride, 2006; Grisham-Brown, Pretti-Frontczak, Hawkins, & Winchell, 2009; Grisham- Brown, Schuster, Hemmeter, & Collin, 2000; Odom, 2000; Rakap and Parlak-Rakap, 2011). Although the natural teaching process is generally used with pre-school children in the literature, there are also studies showing that embedding teaching opportunities in activities is also effective in different age groups (Chiara, Schuster, Bell ve Wolery, 1995; Daugherty, Grisham-Brown ve Hemmeter, 2001; Grisham-Brown, Pretti-Frontczak, Hawkins ve Winchell, 2009; Grisham-Brown, Ridgley, Pretti-Frontczak, Litt ve Nielson, 2006; Horn, Lieber, Li, Sandal ve Schwartz, 2000; Johnson, Rahn ve Bricker, 2004; Macy ve Bricker, 2007; Malmskog ve Mcdonnell, 1999; Pretti-Frontczak ve Bricker).

The reasons for the widespread use of natural teaching today; The increasing importance given to inclusion/integration practices that advocate the education of children with special needs and normal development together, and the prevalence of developmentally appropriate approaches and methods that are suitable for these environments, which will not disrupt the flow of education, can be included in the home environment, and which will ensure the generalization of what is learned. At the beginning of these implications is natural teaching. In this direction, the natural teaching process and the environmental regulations, strategies and techniques that can be used in this process have been tried to be discussed in detail in these booklets, which were prepared in order to explain the philosophy of natural education to preschool teachers and to enable teachers to easily implement this process in their classrooms.

Characteristics of Natural Teaching

There are four basic features of natural teaching.

It is important for **the teaching process to be successful and effective** that these four basic features are reflected in the practices in the natural teaching process.

Characteristics of Natural Teaching

1 Monitoring the child's leadership and interest

2 Using routines, activities and transitions as a teaching environment

3 Activities, objects or toys that are in a natural and meaningful relationship with the environment and behavior are natural reinforcers.

4 Generalization: Teaching is carried out in different environments, in different situations and with different individuals.

1. Monitoring the Child's Leadership and Interest

It is one of the most important features of the natural teaching process that the child's interest and motivation should be taken into account in teaching.

Studies conducted on this subject show that the teaching process, which is presented in direct connection with situations or activities in which children are interested or highly motivated, provides successful results (Koegel & Koegel, 1944; Pretti-Frontczak and Bricker; 2004). The important point here is that the child's interest and curiosity should be carefully observed by the adult in order to effectively achieve the goals set for the child, and the child's leadership should be followed and related skills should be supported. This makes it necessary for the adult to be a good observer.
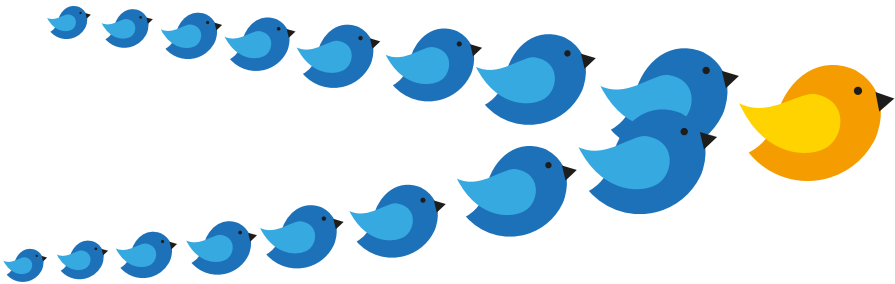
1 Careful observation of the child's interest and curiosity

2 Supporting the child's related skills by following their leadership

These two main points are; it is of great importance for a successful teaching process and for effectively achieving the goals set for the child.

As a matter of fact, the basis of the natural teaching process is to follow the child's interest and leadership and to give appropriate answers.

Ayça is a teacher who follows the interests and leadership of her students and succeeds in turning these moments into teaching opportunities. For this, she observes her students well and gives appropriate answers in line with their development.

2. Using Routines, Activities and Transitions as a Teaching Environment

During the day, there are many different routines, activities and transitions in our lives that we are aware of or not, such as personal care, food preparation, cleaning.

So what exactly do these concepts of routine, activity and transition mean?
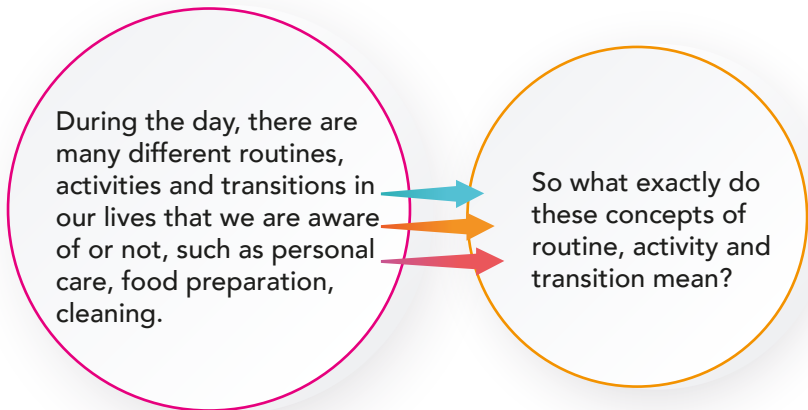
What is a Routine?

Routines; It includes activities that are of vital importance, that we have to participate in during the day and that are repeated every day. Participation in these activities is often compulsory and is a natural part of life. Activities such as eating, toilet, cleaning, feeding, coming and going to school, dressing can be given as examples of the routines we live during the day.

Naturalistic Teaching Process

As you know, in pre-school education institutions, each class has its own routines such as arrival and departure, feeding, toilet and cleaning times. In addition, each routine has its own routine steps. For example, while the feeding time is a daily school routine, the feeding time includes routines such as distributing plates, glasses, spoons and forks, filling water into glasses, etc. To give another example, while coming to school is a daily routine, this routine has routine steps such as preparing a bag, putting on a dress, putting on a coat and shoes. These daily routines and the steps in the routines may differ according to the child, family and educational institution.

Other activities other than academic/social activities in the daily plan can also be seen routinely. For example, times such as birthday celebrations or private sharing areas can also be included in routines.

What is an Activity?

Activities are events that take place in pre-school education institutions and are carried out at certain time intervals in line with the daily plan.

Activities such as language, music, art, science, mathematics, game activities can be given as examples of activities in pre-school education institutions.

In practice, the activities mentioned above can be planned in different ways (individual, small group or large group). In addition, activities can be carried out as structured, semi-structured or unstructured practices. While structured activities are the activities in which the teacher plays a dominant role and what to do and the rules are determined in advance, semi-structured activities have less teacher direction and flexibility for changes in these activities. In unstructured activities, there is free choice of the student. In these activities, the teacher may have partial or no direction.

Academic activities such as language, literacy preparation, and mathematics activities are generally teacher-directed, that is, structured; music, art, science and nature activities are semi-structured; free play can be planned as unstructured activities.

All the different activities that occur during the day, whether structured, semi-structured or unstructured, offer many opportunities for the natural teaching process. For example, in the free play activity, children can choose their games independently in line with their own interests and curiosities, and the goals that children should achieve can be embedded in these activities in a natural way. Science and nature activities, which give children the opportunity of trial and error with the experiments carried out, and where the student is more active, can be used as natural teaching moments. Apart from this, instead of playing a dominant role in academic activities such as preparation for literacy and mathematics, the teacher can create natural and meaningful teaching opportunities for children by following the interests and leadership of the children. Creating these opportunities requires educators to think creatively and to make natural teaching a philosophy, that is, to internalize it.

In the preschool period, play is one of the most important natural activities for children, offering many opportunities to learn and reinforce these learned skills in daily activities; because children choose play activities independently according to their own interests and curiosities. Therefore, these activities are natural and meaningful environments for children.

The point that should be emphasized here is that environments that will provide **"effective and permanent learning"** for the child in the natural education process should be created. For this, all the natural moments that occur in the existing natural environment can be used for learning, and sometimes it may be necessary to organize and configure the environment by using environmental regulation strategies to achieve the goals set for the child. In this context, the natural teaching process does not mean that adults follow the child's interest and leadership and do whatever comes to mind at that moment. The natural teaching process is the systematic planning of which skills will be given to the child during the routine, activity and transition moments that occur naturally during the day and how these goals will be gained by the child (with which environmental arrangements, which teaching strategies and techniques). Although the environment is sometimes partially structured with environmental arrangements, the important thing is that this process should look very natural for the child.

Let's explain with an example...

Hasan teacher wants to support the development of his student, who has limitations in expressing his wishes and demanding skills. For this, he sits next to his student during feeding activities and while giving water to all his students, he arranges the environment by placing the water in a place where Ahmet cannot reach him so that he can demand it. Hasan teacher is a model for his student to reach for water with his hand and make a request by saying **"water"** at every opportunity. In his daily plan, teacher Hasan makes plans regarding such environmental arrangements and the techniques (prompts) to offer help to his student, and records his student's reactions (correct response, wrong response, no response).

As teachers, it is not desirable to be a spectator to students' game activities. Instead, teachers can provide guidance at a level to support learning for students by participating in their students' games with the **"facilitator or guide role"**.

The most important and effective person in transforming the game into a learning or reinforcing learned skills with the role of guide is the teacher. Ask your students, who play two different and separate games, in case of need, **"Let's feed the animals in your farm with your food?"** It is a good example of the teacher's **"facilitator or guide role"** that two children combine their games and direct them to the game.

What Is a Transition?

Numerous transitions occur during the day, which are a natural part of the day. These transitions are very natural and very effective moments for teaching.

Transition can be defined as the process of moving from one routine to another, or from one activity to another. For example, processes such as coming to school and then going to the classroom, going from a leisure time activity to breakfast, and going from breakfast to an art activity are transitional moments.

When we examine the half and full-day sample programs of pre-school education institutions below; The process from coming to school and changing clothes (for example, putting on shoes) to the moment of going to class, the process from free time activity (for example, free play) to the transition to breakfast or the transition to language activities after breakfast are transitional moments that you can turn into learning opportunities for children.

★	Arrival to school, cleaning, health check, free time activities	08.30 – 09.45		★	Arrival to school, cleaning, health check, free time activities	12.45 – 14.45
★	Gathering and cleaning	09.45 – 10.00		★	Gathering and cleaning	14.45 – 15.00
★	Breakfast	10.00 – 10.15		★	Breakfast	15.00 – 15.15
★	Gathering and cleaning	10.15 – 10.30		★	Gathering and cleaning	15.15 – 15.30
★	Language (Turkish) activities	10.30 – 11.00		★	Language (Turkish) activities	15.30 – 16.00
★	Play activities	11.00 – 11.30		★	Play activities	16.00 – 16.30
★	Musical activities	11.30 – 11.45		★	Musical activities	16.30 – 16.45
★	Preparatory studies for literacy	11.45 – 12.15		★	Preparatory studies for literacy	16.45 – 17.15
★	Homecoming preparations	12.15 – 12.30		★	Homecoming preparations	17.15 – 17.30

Naturalistic Teaching Process

When the transitional moments between the end of an activity and the start of another activity are not well planned and followed, it can affect the teaching process negatively by causing confusion among students and the emergence of many problematic behaviors.

For this reason, it is very important to plan and monitor the transition moments well. Well planned and monitored transitions can play a role in reducing students' problem behavior.

So why are Routine, Activity, and Transitions Important?

Routines, activities and transitions within the child's daily life and in the natural environment (home, school, classroom, etc.) are **the most natural times** for the creation of learning opportunities.

The use of routines, activities and transitions within the child's daily life as an effective teaching environment is one of the important features of the natural teaching process; because the interaction times that occur at the moment of daily routine, activity and transitions offer **repetitive teaching opportunities** to teach children new skills and reinforce the learned skills. This is because these teaching opportunities consist of routines that are repeated almost every day, both during the day and during home/school life.

Natural teaching process; It provides opportunities for teachers working in pre-school education classes to use routines, activities and transitions effectively in teaching.

The Routines, Activities and Transitions that we sometimes ignore...

It is of great importance for children with special needs; because children who develop normally can learn and develop spontaneously thanks to the natural interactions they establish during daily routines, activities and transitions.

However, a child with special needs may need support in order to learn and develop through the natural interactions established during these daily routines, activities and transitions.
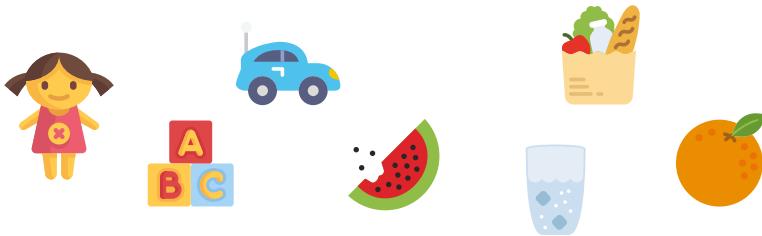
At this point, an adult who interacts with the child during daily routines, activities and transitions can use these moments effectively to help the child develop when s/he needs it.

3. Activities, Objects or Toys as Natural Reinforcements

In the natural teaching process, activities, objects or toys themselves are accepted as reinforcers. Therefore, the reinforcement of the child's behav-ior should be a natural part of his/her natural environment, that is, routines, activities and transitions.

For example, the results such as giving water to the child who wants the water properly, giving the child who wants the toy properly, giving the child the opportunity to choose the activity that s/he shares with his friend

toy or food are called **natural reinforcers**, because in these interactions, the activity that the children try to acquire or reach the object or toys are naturally occurring reinforcers that are directly linked to their behavior or actions.

The activities, objects or toys that children are interested in, trying to acquire or reach during the interactions that occur in their daily natural life are actually the most effective reinforcers for them. These reinforcers, which increase the motivation of young children, play a supportive role in children's learning. For example, when a child who wants to play with the ship expresses his wish by saying **"game"**, reaching the ship is a much more effective reinforcement for him than saying **"well done, you said game"**.

Let's explain with another example...

Asu teacher supports the development of her student who has language limitations. For this reason, teacher Asu places the water in a place where student cannot reach it, so that her student asks her to do it during the feeding activities.

When her student looked at the water, **"Did you want water?"** she says and waits for her student to say **"water"**. When student meets her expectation, she gives the water to him.

In this example, "water" was presented to the student as a natural reinforcer in response to his reaction.

4. Generalization: Teaching in Different Environments, Different Situations and with Different People

Generalization means that the acquired skills or behaviors are exhibited in different environments, in different situations (for example, at different times of the day, in different contexts and activities) and with different individuals.

When we consider the characteristics of children with special needs, it is seen that these children have problems generalizing a skill, concept or behavior that they have just learned to different environments, individuals and time. Since the targeted objectives for the child in the natural teach-ing process will be gained in natural contexts and environments, it is not necessary to separate the generalization environment by allocating time for the acquisition of these objectives. In other words, the natural teaching process allows the teacher to support his special needs student in his class in many different environments and situations (planning for the realization of generalization).

Let's explain with another example...

Teacher Burak has a student in his class who communicates at a single-word level. Burak teacher has chosen certain words to expand his student's vocabulary and uses these words extensively in daily routine, transition and activities at every opportunity. *"Open"* is one of those words. His student can now use this word he has learned in appropriate situations, in environments outside the classroom and when he is with different people.

Natural Teaching Process: 3-WH-Questions?

The natural teaching process does not mean a random teaching process. While the learning opportunities that arise in the natural process are used for teaching purposes in natural teaching, it is necessary to systematically plan and use routines, activities and transitions as teaching opportunities. In this planning process, the inclusion of the instructional objectives determined for the student in routines, activities and transitions, and the use of instructional techniques (pre-behavior, during and after the behavior) during the determined routines, activities and transitions. This planning process in natural teaching can be explained with 3Wh Questions:

WHAT	WHERE	HOW?

1. What?

The first *"Wh"* in the 3Wh process is the answer we seek to the question of what to teach. The answer to the question of what to teach is the instructional objectives determined for the child and included in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

In determining the objectives, it is very important to put forward functional educational objectives that are correct and realistic, in other words, determined in line with the needs of the child. For example, purposes such as cutting with scissors for a child who cannot hold a pencil, or telling a story for a child who has only one word-level expressive language are not functional and realistic objectives for these children. In addition, the instructional objectives set for the child should be generalizable and measurable.

Characteristics of Instructional Objectives

01 **FUNCTIONAL: It means that the skill determined for the child in the objective sentence is a skill that increases the child's participation in daily routines, activities and transitions, supports independence, is necessary for completing the daily routine, activities and transitions, and gives it as peer interaction.**

02 **GENERALIZABLE: It means that the skill in the objective sentence is expressed in a way that it can be used in different daily routines, activities and transitions, with different people and with different tools.**

03 **MEASUREABLE: What should the student do in which situations, at what level/rate? A purpose statement that answers the question indicates that the purpose has been measurably expressed. A measurable goal statement includes acquisition indicators of a skill or behavior.**

A person reading a well-written sentence of objectives…

02 How to teach the relevant skill during the day,

01 What level of support the child needs,

03 which materials or tools can be used in teaching the skill,

07 the child needs to see and understand the criteria for acquiring the skill.

04 how the skill can be generalized,

06 that the relevant skill is expressed in a measurable and observable way, and

05 how this skill is used in natural settings,

Let's explain with examples...

Ali is a student whose fine motor skills need to be supported. Ali performs the skill of using scissors with the full physical help of the adult, and his teacher aims that Ali to perform this skill independently. In this direction, the objective sentences that can be written for Ali can be as follows, on the basis of the gradual reduction of adult help:

01 Steve cuts different materials (e.g., paper, rope, etc.) with full physical prompt from the adult during different activities (arts and other activities) that take place in the classroom on three of the four attempts, four days in a row.

02 Steve cuts different materials (e.g., paper, rope, etc.) with partial physical prompt from the adult during different activities (arts and other activities) that take place in the classroom in three of the four attempts, four days in a row.

03 Steve cuts different materials (e.g., paper, string, etc.) independent-ly during different activities (arts and other activities) that take place in the classroom on three of the four attempts, four days in a row.

2. Where?

The second **Wh** question in 3Wh question is the answer we seek to the question of where the goals set for the student will be gained or where they will be taught. As mentioned earlier, there are countless teaching opportunities during the day in different settings and in the routines, activities and transitions that occur in these settings. Therefore, it is very important to gain the determined goals in different routines, activities and transitions during the day. Let's see once again what these routines, activities and transitions can be:

ROUTINES

Dressing-undressing
Nutrition
Cleaning
Toilet

ACTIVITIES

Free play
Art activities
Music activities
Language activities
Science activities

TRANSITIONS

Arrival and departure to school
Collecting toys, equipment
Transition between activities
Boarding and disembarking to shuttle

Let's go back to our example...

The teacher decided to develop Ali's scissor-cutting skill during free play, feeding and art activities. In this direction, the teacher designed a game of cutting/sewing clothes for the babies in the context of the house game during the free play. Teacher brought paper plates at the feeding event and aimed for Ali to cut these plates in half and distribute them to her friends. In the art event, s/he planned collage (cut-paste) works with different materials.

3. How?

The answer to the question of how lies in the teaching of the purpose or objectives (What?) for the student in daily routines, activities and transitions (Where?). The answer to the question of how is the environmental arrangements, natural teaching strategies and techniques that the teacher will use. The explanations and examples of these environmental arrangements, strategies and techniques are discussed in detail in the booklets called **"environmental arrangements, instructional strategies and techniques"**. Arrangements, strategy and techniques are as follows:

Environmental Arrangements

- Making Inaccessible
- Giving in Limited Proportion / Piece by Piece
- Leaving Incomplete
- Creating Surprising / Unexpected Situations

Strategy and Techniques

- **Modeling**
  - Modeling without Expecting a Response
  - Choices / Making Choice
  - Expanding Language Modeling
  - Modeling by using expansion, Mand Modeling
- **Asking Right Questions**
- **Time Delay Procedure**
- **Prompts (Physical Prompt, Model Prompt, Verbal Prompt, Non-verbal Prompt)**

Natural Teaching Plan (NTP)

It is necessary to systematize how to achieve the goals set for the student within the framework of a plan we will call the Natural Teaching Plan. NTP is aimed at acquiring the objectives in the IEP developed for the child and is a functionally made more practical version of the IEP.

NTP is a plan that summarizes which goals are determined for the target student (What?), in which environments (Where?) and with which strategies and techniques (How?) the goals will be achieved and put them into a systematic form. Thus, the teacher can determine what to do for the target student in a more practical way.

Let's fill in NTP for Ali in our example...

Student's name: Ali		**Date:**
WHAT?	**WHERE?**	**HOW?**
Cutting different materials	1. Free play 2. Feeding activity 3. Art activity	1. Full physical prompt 2. Partial physical prompt
2.		
3.		
4.		

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