TRANSITION TIMES: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF *AIDA* (BETWEENNESS) IN A JAPANESE DAYCARE

by

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(Under the Direction of Joseph Tobin)

ABSTRACT

The central themes of this project are transition times and *aida* (間; betweenness, in-between, relationality), which are explored in three independent papers in the core of this dissertation. *Aida* (and other readings of the same character such as *ma*) imply spatial, temporal, and/or interpersonal relationality. This project takes an ethnographic approach to attend to betweenness in transitions practices and rituals between activities within the day at a Japanese *hoikuen* (daycare) focusing on the birth to three classrooms.

In Chapter One, I briefly introduce the notion of *aida* as an everyday expression and as a philosophical notion, this projects' purpose and goals, the ethnographic methods employed in this study, and the previous bodies of literature on the anthropology of early childhood education in Japan and on in-betweenness in early childhood education and care globally. In Chapter Two, the notion of *aida* as an emic notion of relationality and pedagogy guide an exploration of a transition ritual that marks the border between transition times and activity times. In particular, it explores how tempo and register changes in the ritual serve to demarcate and prepare children for a new context in which different norms of behavior are required. Chapter Three proposes a methodological framework for exploring emergence, causality, and multiplicity in transition times guided by Kimura Bin’s (e.g., 2005) phenomenological notion of *aida* in conversation with Jane Bennett’s (2010; 2020) ideas of vital materiality and causality as assemblages of influence. Chapter Four applies the methodology of Chapter Three to a micro-analysis of short interactions in a single transition time in the infant classroom transitioning between nap time and snack time. This paper explores assemblages in the classroom that are hubs of energy, drawing other entities into engagement, and discusses notions of the qualities of these entities/assemblages, their multiplicity, and co-arising/emergence among (*aida*, in-between) the assemblage. In Chapter Five, the conclusion presents the contributions, limitations, and future directions of this project, attending to the benefits of using multiple methodological approaches to explore the same theme: transition times.

INDEX WORDS: Early childhood education and care, Daycare, Hoikuen, Transitions, Birth to three, The anthropology of Japan, Aida, Betweenness, In-between, Assemblage, Vibrant matter

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DEDICATION

To my mom, Robin, for her patience with and care of a child who struggled with transitions.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

A group of one- and two-year-olds in the focal daycare are seated around their teacher as story time ends and they transition to naptime. The seated toddlers wait as each child's name is called. "Mari," calls the teacher. Mari raises her hand high and responds "hai" (yes), and smiles as she gives her teacher a hug. They say "rest well" to each other, and Mari finds her mat for nap. This routine repeats for each of the children in the group. No children fuss while waiting and only one child approaches the teacher out of turn, though many of the children move around as they wait.

The scene above could be described using terms such as order, discipline, and compliance. In fact, stereotypes of Japan often invoke these notions. However, using video of this scene and others as a cue for a semi-structured interview, I found that infant and toddler teachers in a daycare (*hoikuen*) where I did fieldwork in an urban center in Japan had a strikingly different characterization of the activity. There was no mention of notions of control or discipline. Instead, the teachers discussed the anticipation and joy of having one's name called—being recognized as a self among the group and as a participant in group activities. The teachers talked about how the ritual of calling children by their names one-by-one is the foundation of the teacher-child relationship in daycare.

This project on transition times in a Japanese *hoikuen* questions commonly held assumptions about transition practices in early childhood education and care (ECEC). In ECEC settings, transitions are often conceptualized as something to be accomplished quickly and efficiently to avoid behavior problems and maximize productive learning time (e.g., Guardino & Fullerton, 2014; Olive, 2004; Sainato, Strain, Lefebvre, & Rapp, 1987). In the context of daycare, the "real work" of learning is usually posited as occurring in activities such as circle time, free play time, and snack time. These activities are viewed as having content and purpose. Transitions, however, fill the gaps in the day—the time-spaces between one activity and the next.

In this study I explore these quotidian moments from an ethnographic perspective, attending particularly to the temporality of transition times that occur between the activities of the day. The core of this dissertation is three journal article-style papers. In this introductory chapter I provide a brief background to the concept *aida* (betweenness), which I employed in each of the papers that make up this study, and how it guided my research questions and methods. Next, I introduce my field site and methods. Then I review the literature on ethnographic studies of ECEC in Japan and how notions of betweenness have been explored in the ECEC literature globally. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a brief introduction to the theme of each of the three journal article-style papers and the concluding chapter.

Research Purpose and Research Questions

In this project, I use the term *aida*/*ma* (two readings of the same character, 間; "betweenness") as a guiding concept. In its everyday use, *aida* refers to spatial relations (located between) and *ma* to temporal relations (a period of time between). In these senses, the term simply means a spatial and/or temporal "between." In fact, to describe transition times, the lead teacher of the two-year-old class at Kansai Hoikuen (pseudonym) used the term *katsudo to katsudo no aida* (between one activity and another). However, *aida*/*ma* also describes interpersonal relationality. This notion has been taken up in Japanese phenomenology, particularly by contemporary psychiatrist and phenomenologist Kimura Bin. In his theory of *aida*, self and other co-emerge, adapting to one another and changing as the milieu changes (Kimura, 1988). I take up both the everyday and philosophical uses of *aida*/*ma* in this study to explore transition times. Specifically, in Chapter Two, I employ *ma* to explore the temporal qualities of rituals marking the borders of transitions. In Chapter Three I more extensively explore the everyday and philosophical uses of *aida* to establish methods to explore the quotidian practices in transition times, and in Chapter Four I apply those notions to an analysis of a transition between nap and snack time in one classroom.

Building on the notions of *aida*/*ma*, I explore transition practices and inter-relationality that emerges though the practices in the focal *hoikuen*. The following questions guide this research:

1. What implicit cultural transition practices are made visible by attending to *aida*/*ma* at a *hoikuen* in Japan?
2. What research methods are implicated by considering theoretical notions of *aida*/*ma*?
3. What can an analysis of transition times that foregrounds *aida*/*ma* in the context of a *hoikuen* in Japan add to current understandings of early childhood education?

In Chapter Two I address the first and third research questions in the form of an ethnography of a transition ritual, in Chapter Three I focus on the second research question, and in Chapter Four I apply my findings from exploring the second research question to an analysis of transition times that contributes to addressing research question three. In my final chapter I compare the approaches I took in Chapter Two and Chapter Four highlighting how a combination of two methodologies allowed me to attend to the cultural and pedagogical meanings of transition practices as well as the emergent, particular aspects of transitions.

Methods

In this section I introduce my field site and outline my methods for data collection. I further explore specific methods for analysis in Chapters Two through Four, and therefore touch on them only briefly in this section.

Kansai Hoikuen

Kansai Hoikuen is located in Osaka, the second most populous urban area in Japan. It serves children ages six-months through five-years-old with one classroom for infants, two classrooms for toddlers, and one each for three-, four- and five-year-old children. The infant class has six children with 2 full-time teachers in the room, the toddler rooms have 15-20 children with 2 full-time teachers and one floating staff member in the room, and in the older classes (3-, 4-, and 5-year-old classes) there is one teacher for approximately 20 students with floating staff helping in each room at different times during the day. This is typical, if not on the smaller side, for student-teacher ratios in ECEC in Japan (see for example, Tobin, Wu & Davidson, 1989). I describe Kansai Hoikuen and the surrounding community in more detail in Chapter Two.

I observed in the infant and toddler classrooms of Kansai Hoikuen once or twice weekly most weeks between September 2019 and February 2020. Initially my plan was to continue participant observation through August 2020, but I was unable to continue past February 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I filmed two full days in each of the focal classrooms in October and November of 2019. I used edited clips from this film as a cue to interview the teachers and *hoikuen* director in two interviews. I also used the larger body of video footage as data for microanalysis. I describe these procedures further below and also in Chapters Two through Four.

Ethnographic Approach

By an ethnographic approach, I am suggesting that this project is guided by principles of "rigorous anthropological inquiry—including long-term and open-ended commitment, generous attentiveness, relational depth, and sensitivity to context" (Ingold, 2014, p. 384) that favors emic constructs, or insider perspectives—the practices and sensemaking or perspectives of stakeholders at the site (e.g., administrators, teachers, children). This project focuses on transition practices and how transition practices come to take on meanings and is sensitive to the specific context of the site (school, community, cultural practices, climate, atmosphere, etc.).

More specifically, the methodology of this project is framed in terms of an anthropological commitment to observe and learn about practices in a *hoikuen* in Japan through fieldwork that embraces the spirit of participant observation in which "to observe is not to objectify; it is to attend to persons and things, to learn from them, and to follow in precept and practice" (Ingold, 2014, pp. 387-388) and in analysis attempts to document the particularities and nuances of the practices in this site. Importantly in this orientation, learning about the site is oriented not just to the human actors but also to the non-human actants (including things, concepts, and practices) and the interactions among them.

Data Collection and Analysis

In my observations (both as participant observer and through video), I attend to the *hoikuen* classes as a whole, to teachers and children in their interactions, and to the milieu rather than focusing on individuals as units of analysis. This approach prioritizes *aida* (betweenness). In observing the quotidian practices of transition times at the focal *hoikuen*, I attended to evidence of different references to time and routines in both language and practice. I considered the following questions in my observations: How is time talked about during the day? How do rhythms and tempos fluctuate across the day and more specifically in transition times? How are parts of the day demarcated? How do individual children and the class as a whole act the same and differently across different contexts? What transition routines are recognizable across contexts and what practices are highly particular to the transition in action? In my analysis, I considered how transitions practices are unique and emergent each time they are enacted/performed and yet also may be familiar, patterned, and connected with other practices in ECEC in Japan.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is an often-used method for data collection during ethnographic fieldwork in which the researcher takes on a dual role as someone who both participates in the practices of a community and observes community members in their practices (Spradley, 2016). I used participant observation as a method to familiarize myself with the routines and events of interest at Kansai Hoikuen in my study. Participant observation served as a method for gathering data (in sharing in experiences at the *hoikuen* and in the form of field notes) and as a way to build rapport at the site prior to collecting video and interview data.

As a participant observer in the classrooms, I joined in the daily activities of the class in a variety of roles. Most often I joined in with the children's play, oversaw toddlers on the playground, wiped off tables, helped children settle into nap time, and ate lunch with the children. Other times I took notes in the corner and/or documented activities with my camera. Like the teachers, I wore athletic wear in my time in the classrooms at the *hoikuen* rather than business clothing, and I went barefoot on the playground and in the classrooms as the children and teachers all did. In general, I took my cues from how the teachers interacted with children. Although older children might go along with a researcher acting as another child in the classroom, the children I observed were under three. Working with these very young children, it did not seem possible or ethical to take on a non-adultlike role as these young children depend on adults to meet their care and comfort needs. While observing and filming in the classroom, children often brought toys to show me, held out their shirts for assistance changing clothes, and pulled my hand toward the slide to help them go up and down. Acting either disengaged from the classroom (e.g., while filming) or acting as another child during these times (other children that age often ignore their peers or simply play in parallel) was not a stance in which I felt comfortable engaging. That being said, my goal to imitate the teachers was easier said than done, and that in itself provided invaluable opportunities for noticing practices and pedagogical values. The kinds of questions that arose through this engagement were, for example, when a child made eye contact while their hand was stuck in their sleeve when putting on their smock, in what way and at what timing would a teacher intervene if they intervened at all? Is that the same way or same timing I feel drawn to intervene in? These situations where I felt unsure prompted closer observations, facilitated conversations with the teachers, and helped me narrow my study focus to attending to interactions during transition times as transitions were especially filled with moments that gave me pause to consider practices.

Video Ethnographic Methods

In consultation with the *hoikuen*, I selected two consecutive days in each of the infant and toddler classrooms to film “typical” days. Elements never fully expressible by language such as time, space, location, gaze, posture, and touch (Tobin & Hayashi, 2015) are made available through visual media in a way other media are not able to capture. For this reason, video data was invaluable both for analysis and also for use as a stimulus in eliciting interviews.

Visual anthropologist David MacDougall (2006) discusses the potential for film to explore a “temporary coalescence of elements” – a “matrix of life” (p. 106). For MacDougall, the literal framing of the camera lens works to make cuts in events (time and space), and while this certainly limits in some ways, it also “distills and concentrates experience,” and “by isolating observations, it reveals commonalities and connections that may have gone unnoticed before” (p. 4). He goes on to write that not only is there potential for the framing to distill but also for framing “to show what lies beyond or in spite of the frame” (p. 4). In other words, because of all the potential cuts that could be made of an event or space, the actual cuts made by image framing also suggest what is spatially and temporally beyond the images captured. Perle Møhl (2011) describes “a densification that occurs when the camera is turned on” (p. 233) in which participants might perform a version of themselves and their practices in front of the camera that condenses or emphasizes their ordinary practices “when they seek to mark out things more clearly by choosing significant actions and activities, or to speak in more precise ways, and even to accelerate movements and processes” (p. 233). As these visual anthropologists have noted, adding a video camera to the context limits what can be seen and changes the context. However, these are not necessarily negative limits and changes but the beginning of analysis.

With a focus on *aida*/*ma*, I attempted to film and edit in a way that captured interesting interactions but kept a wide enough angle to include the milieu. Rather than only focusing on capturing the actions/expressions of a central protagonist, I attempted to capture the context as well. Two techniques I used to highlight context were to film from wide angles and to edit with long sequences or cuts intact. I also attended to how the camera captures foreground and background, keeping as much in focus as possible. In the findings sections of Chapters Two and Four, I attempt to evoke the spatial and temporal “mood” of the scenes to allow the audience, as much as possible, to feel a sense of the atmosphere and tempo by including sequences of still shots from key scenes.

Video-Cued Ethnographic Interviews

Tobin and colleagues developed a method of using video as a cue for focus-group interviews (multi-vocal video-cued interviews: Tobin, 2019; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989). This method was central in my project since my topic considers temporality and spatiality, a topic that is not easily accessible through traditional interview techniques. One could image the difficulty of eliciting useful responses from questions such as "What practices in transition times help children build a sense of self and community?" What otherwise could be a very abstract and ambiguous topic for the purpose of interviewing, is more easily accessed through video cues when practices can be viewed together. While still not fully possible for practitioners to "explain" their practices, video was invaluable for getting at meaning making, emic constructs, and affect related to transition practices.

I conducted two rounds of video-cued interviews. In the first I showed the *hoikuen* director and head teachers from the infant and toddler rooms a 10-minute edited film of clips from transitions in each class. We discussed their impressions and reactions to the scenes, and I asked questions about their practices and the meanings behind them. Two weeks later I re-interviewed the same group using the same video cue and a transcript of our first interview. This allowed me to check my understanding of their meanings and for the teachers to add detail to their previous responses where they thought their meaning might be unclear. I drew from these video-cued interviews in Chapter Two to help analyze transition rituals.

Microanalysis of Video

In both Chapters Two and Four I employ microanalysis of video. While microanalysis could be anything that focuses (or refocuses) one's attention to the details of footage rather than overarching narratives, I specifically use the technique of conducting a frame-by-frame viewing and analysis of scenes of interest (Hayashi & Tobin, 2012; 2015).

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research such as the project I undertook requires some methods of ensuring trustworthiness (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), and in this study I employed three methods to increase validity. First, I spent extended time in the setting (six months) providing frequent opportunities to observe transition practices and draw conclusions about what were typical routines and what parts of the transitions were unique to the particular day and time I describe. Second, through employing two rounds of video-cued interviews, I had the opportunity to clarify the teachers' meanings and my emerging interpretations of the practices in an approach similar to a widely used technique of member checking. Third, I employed thick description in my write-up of the data so that readers may more easily determine for themselves whether my analyses seem logical based on the observations. These are all recommended techniques for ensuring validity in qualitative research based on a synthesis of the literature compiled by Creswell and Creswell (2018).

Ethical Considerations

Research with human subjects—and especially with children—requires careful ethical considerations (Freeman & Mathison, 2009). In particular, in this study where I collected and analyzed visual images of children and teachers, I needed to consider how the participants in this study were positioned and represented (Cutter-Mackenzie, Edwards, & Widdop Quinton, 2015;

Freeman & Mathison, 2009; Lipponen, Rajala, Hilppo, & Paananen, 2016). Many recent studies propose to position child (as well as adult) participants as co-investigators in generating images and participating in meaning making (e.g., Cutter-Mackenzie et al., 2015; Lipponen, et al., 2016). However, this approach did not seem to fit well with my study purposes and the age group I worked with. Instead, I favored an approach in which the participants are the experts in their practices and my goal was to learn about these practices through the experiences of participant observation and dialogue. In other words, I sought a correspondence with participants and not an objectification of their practices (Ingold, 2014). I considered the participants (children and teachers) as experts rather than as co-investigators.

Another ethical issue in working with children is representation. One specific way I worked to ensure the participants (especially children) are represented respectfully was to build checks into my process. I obtained written consent from parents and assent from children prior to any documentation, including audio and visual recording. With the youngest children (under three) determining assent is difficult. I did not photograph or video document in the classrooms until the children had gotten used to my presence, and I removed my camera and video camera when the equipment or act of documenting seemed to be interfering with daily activities in the classroom more than momentarily. I sought feedback from participants about the images I used in this project, making sure that the *hoikuen* staff were comfortable with the images. Finally, all people and place names (more detailed than the level of the city name) were de-identified and replaced with pseudonyms in this project.

Literature Review

Previous Studies on Early Childhood Education in Japan

Much of the anthropological literature on early childhood education in Japan (including comparative projects) has focused on socio-emotional development. Classic volumes include Merry White's (1987) *The Japanese Educational Challenge*; Lois Peak's *Learning to Go to School* (1993); Tobin, Wu, and Davidson's (1989) *Preschool in Three Cultures* and Tobin, Hsueh and Karasawa's *Preschool in Three Cultures Revisited (2009)*; Catherine Lewis' *Educating Hearts and Minds* (1995); and Eyal Ben-Ari's Body *Projects in Japanese Childcare* (1997). In a review of more recent literature of early childhood education in Japan, I came across multiple ethnographies of early childhood education and care. However, I did not find any research that specifically attended to the rhythms of transition times as a central theme or the notion of *aida*/*ma*, indicating a potential gap in the current literature.

While there is not a literature that specifically addresses the notion of *aida/ma* (betweenness) in Japanese early childhood education, across ethnographies of Japanese early childhood education we can find attention to exploration of daily routines; transitional spaces in schools (e.g., the practices of entering or not crossing the *genkan* or entrance space as described by Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989); and pedagogical practices that emphasize temporal considerations such as the teachers holding back from intervention by taking a view that emphasizes a *nagaime* (long term or literally, "long eyed") perspective—thinking long-term (the span of years), about children's development (Hayashi & Tobin, 2015; Peak, 1993; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009).

There are also several studies that focus on embodiment that also in some way engage with betweenness (Ben-Ari, 1997; Burke and Duncan, 2015; Hayashi & Tobin, 2015; Tahhan, 2014). Several salient examples from this literature are suggestive of the potential richness for an exploration of temporality in early childhood education in Japan. Ben-Ari (1996; 1997) describes sleeping practices in the daycare center he studied. Children in this center (like many other daycare centers in Japan) sleep on *futon* mats laid out in a large room. He explained that this is similar to how most children sleep at home. He describes that while beds are clearly bounded, separate units that are spaced apart (often even in separate rooms), *futon* are mobile and laid out next to each other in shared areas during times of sleep with less clear boundaries between each person's sleeping space. In daycare centers the routine of nap time is arranged like home sleeping with children lying on *futon* often touching and interacting quietly with the children next to them. In a sense this helps the daycare to serve as a transitional time between home and school. Teachers may lie next to children who have a hard time settling and may even share a blanket. Ben-Ari's explanation of *futon* in nap time clearly takes into account how materials, space (bed/*futon*, ambiguous boundaries/clear boundaries), and time (routine, transition) afford different kinds of sleeping relationships and serve to create a space at school that blurs the home/school dichotomy.

Burke and Duncan's (2015) work *Bodies as Sites of Cultural Reflection in Early Childhood Education* is a comparative study between preschools in Japan and New Zealand that applies a Foucauldian analysis to embodiment at these sites. They discuss rituals of transitions in their description of perceptions of hygiene and health in preschools in Japan. In particular, they describe the practice of gargling with water at the Japanese preschool site as a way of purifying the body (throat) from the impurities of outside (a space of uncleanliness) ostensibly in order to prevent colds. However, students use communal cups to gargle with that are only rinsed out with water between children. Burke and Duncan discuss the practice as symbolic with the space and the ritual practice of gargling creating the "purification." These symbolic practices that mark times, spaces, and transitions between them.

Tahhan's (2014) project *The Japanese Family: Touch, Intimacy and Feeling* mostly explores embodiment and emotion within the context of families caring for young children. However, one chapter in this work discusses early childhood education as a place and time of transition from home to wider society and schooling. Like in homes, at the preschool site she visited, fussy young children in the nursery were carried by their teachers in *onbu* (a style of carrying children in a sling/sash *obi* on one's back). Being asked to carry a child herself in this way provoked Tahhan to reflect on the material and embodied experience of *onbu*. She writes that

> it seems that the state of relaxation possible in *onbu* . . . incorporates the relationships with objects and *mi* [body] (*mi wo tsuketeiru mono*) [things worn on the body] (Ichikawa 1993, p. 81), that is, the *obi*. That which is attached to *mi* is not a separate entity but an 'extension of people' (Kondo 2005, p. 202) . (p. 97)

In other words, the act of carrying a fussy child in *onbu* involves more than the physical action. The boundaries between child and teacher become fuzzy, not just by their physical proximity, but through the *obi* that binds them together. Drawing from Ichikawa's (1993) theory of the body (*mi*), she suggests that *mi* is not confined to the physical body but includes both the objects and the space (the proximity of the bodies as well as the setting of the interaction).

These studies captured elements of *aida*/*ma* alongside their primary focus on exploring pedagogy and practices, socio-emotional development, and embodiment within daily routines at the early childhood education centers. While *aida*/*ma* is not the foci of these works, they hint at the potential richness of this topic.

Studies of Betweenness and Temporality Early Childhood Education Globally

Notions of betweenness in time and space in ECEC are also addressed in the literature globally, though not from the same lens as *aida*/*ma*. Here I highlight several studies that address notions of temporal rhythms, routines, and spatial betweenness in ECEC.

Studies focusing on time tend to be theoretically driven and focused on comparing the constraints of "clock" time or chronological time (time that progresses forward through the instruments of timetables and clocks, etc.) to other conceptions of time. Pacini-Ketchabaw's (2012) studies argued for exploring the situatedness of time in early childhood education, and Wapanaar (2014) described children's play in relation to rhythmic time (as opposed to the dominate structure of clock time). Tesar's (2016) theoretical piece used the distortion of time in story of Peter Pan to challenge notions of developmental time dominant in policy discourses of ECEC. A different approach to exploring temporality was taken up by Birkland (2019), who analyzed temporal patterns and order in kindergartens in Norway and China concluding that rhythms in Norway favored individualized flexibility and rhythms China favored practices of synchronicity and efficiency.

I found one study that specifically attended to temporality and transition times. In this study Pacini-Ketchabaw (2013) employed a similar approach as the study cited above. She problematized notions of time, specifically the notion of linear progression in "clock time" in which transitions are simply the in-between means of progressing toward more meaningful times in the day, and challenged the idea that transitions are regular and predictable. Instead, drawing on a Deleuzian perspectives, she asks: "How can we focus less on transitions as clean, empty moments and more on transitory spaces filled with rhythms, flows and intensities?" (p. 228).

Like most of studies cited in the paragraph above, however, her exploration of this question is mostly a theoretical discussion.

Though more about spatial in-betweenness than temporal, Han's (2022) dissertation work includes attention to children's experiences in transitional spaces drawing from Walter Benjamin's concept of "threshold." In a very different approach of spatial and material in-betweenness, Odegard and Rossholt (2016) explore children's aesthetic experiences "in-between" reusable materials drawing on feminist new materialist perspectives.

Contributions and Limitations

This body of literature uses a variety of methods and theories as they explore temporality and betweenness, including traditional techniques such as observation and interview as well as visual documentation such as photography. However, many of the studies also veer away from traditional methodological approaches for analysis, especially those adopting a new materialist/posthumanist theoretical framework, favoring instead a style of theory as inquiry (for notable exceptions see Birkland, 2019 and Han, 2022). This trend takes on explorations of theory to make sense of observation and description of practices.

My dissertation study adds to both the anthropology of Japan and the ECEC literature globally in four ways. First, as far as I am aware, *aida*/*ma* as a pedagogical notion is not yet described in the current body of literature in the anthropology of early childhood in Japan. Using these notions allows me to highlight time, quotidian routines, and relations in classroom. My ethnographic exploration of these notions in Chapter Two contributes a new perspective to this body of literature. Second, my study attends to children under three, who are rarely described in the literature above. Third, my approach in Chapter Three and Chapter Four combines theoretical perspectives from the "Western" literature on materiality (like those often cited in the global body of literature on temporality and betweenness in ECEC globally) with theory from Japan, which extends current approaches to exploring temporality and materiality in ECEC. Finally, I prioritize an empirical approach over theoretical exploration, which is not currently used as frequently as an approach in studies of betweenness in ECEC settings (Chapter Two and Chapter Four).

Conclusion

In this study I employ an ethnographic approach to explore transition times in infant and toddler classrooms in a Japanese *hoikuen*. I use the notion of *aida*/*ma* (betweenness that includes a notion of spatial, temporal, and interpersonal relationality) both as an everyday emic notion and as a philosophical concept of time, space, and relationality. This dissertation is organized in the following structure.

In Chapter Two I describe the ritual of calling children's names in a formal way to mark the end of a transition/the beginning of an activity. In this chapter I draw on the concept of *ma* (the reading of 間 that tends to emphasize temporal relationality). I explore the tempo and speech register changes that set this ritual apart from other parts of transition times, and I describe the teachers' perspectives on the meanings of this ritual as a way to foster children's sense of self and sense of belonging to the group in *hoikuen*. In this chapter, I highlight examples from the infant classroom, the one-year-old classroom, and a morning assembly that involved the entire *hoikuen*.

In Chapter Three I propose an experimental methodology for highlighting betweenness in transition routines. I explore the notion of *aida* as a philosophical concept in Japanese phenomenology in conversation with "Western" theories of materiality. I suggest that temporality and materiality might be highlighted by challenging the traditional ways of narrativizing descriptions of interactions (e.g., through vignettes and interpretations of vignettes) by adding the influence of non-human actors into transcripts of interactions and drawing on visual rather than linguistic representations of the interactions. I use brief examples from a transition between lunch to naptime in the two-year-old classroom to demonstrate the proposed methods.

In Chapter Four I apply the methodology I proposed in Chapter Three to an analysis of a single transition. I transcribe two short (20-30 second) scenes from the time between the end of nap time to the beginning of snack time in the infant classroom. This transcript includes both the human and non-human actors involved in the transition. Furthermore, both the linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of the interactions are highlighted by presenting the verbal interactions alongside still images of the scene which show posture and gaze. I further emphasize the changing assemblages of actors by presenting abstracted images of the room to represent webs of interaction across the short scenes from the transition.

In Chapter Five I compare these three papers. I describe the strengths and limitations of both approaches and argue that employing multiple methods that include both more traditional interpretive analyses and analyses that foreground materiality enables a richer description and analysis of transition times. I conclude with a short discussion of future directions for this topic and research method.

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CHAPTER 2[1]

AIDA (BETWEENNESS) AND TRANSITION RITUALS IN A JAPANESE DAYCARE

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Abstract

This paper explores the borders between transition times and activity times in a Japanese *hoikuen* (daycare) focusing on the birth to three classes. Drawing from a larger ethnographic study of transition times, I attend to the ritual of calling children's names one by one as a practice that marks the border between times. This study employs ethnographic video-cued interviews and micro-analysis of video. I describe the ritual elements of the practice such as how tempo and speech register set these rituals apart from other times in the day. I also discuss the meanings of these practices for teachers and children. Throughout the paper I employ the emic notion of *aida* (betweenness, in-between) to conceptualize betweenness of self and group in these rituals.

Key words: early childhood education and care, birth to three, transitions, aida, betweenness, Japan

Introduction

As the one-year-old class toddles onto the playground for free play time, Uno-sensei[2] *draws a circle in the sandy play space, pulls tricycles from their cubbies, and calls out "Budo gumi san*[3] *(grape group), you can get the tricycles." A few children are watching their teachers, others have gone straight to the semi-enclosed sandbox to start scooping up and serving sand ice cream and sand soup, and a few others get the shovels and rakes for digging and sculpting. Minami-sensei joins the children in the sandbox. Some children not in budo gumi are reminded they will get a turn at the tricycles next as they also toddle their fastest toward the trikes.*

In this scene we find a class of toddlers in a Japanese *hoikuen*[4] finishing their transition from activities in the classroom to free play time outside on the playground. This transition was a complex event that included cleaning up from previous activities, donning smocks and hats, changing locations, and getting out new materials for play. There were directions given and followed and sequences of both familiar routines and actions particular to that day. Transitions like this happen dozens of times during the day taking up significant amounts of time; yet they are rarely discussed in curricular guides.

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[2] All person and place names in this article are pseudonyms. Japanese teachers and assistant teachers are addressed by their last name and the honorific *sensei* (teacher) by both children and other teachers. In this article I follow the Japanese convention for teacher names.

[3] In this article I will use the Japanese names for groups. *Kumi/gumi* (組) refers to a group. After the group it describes, it is pronounced *gumi*, but when used on its own is pronounced *kumi*. I use that distinction in my writing in this paper. There are two kinds of *kumi* at the daycare center. Fruit names are used for small groups within a class and animal names are used for class names. Other early childhood care centers also typically employ similar naming systems though perhaps using flower names or color names, for example. The honorific *san* (typically translated in English as Ms./Mr.) is often used after the *kumi* name when referring to those who belong to the group. However, the functional meaning of "... *gumi san*" the phrase is something akin to "members of … group" or "everybody in … class."

[4] *Hoikuen* might be translated into English as daycare or preschool. *Hoikuen* typically serve infants through five-year-old children and operate under the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. The other kinds of early childhood education and care centers in Japan are *youchien* (kindergarten) and *kodomoen* (child center), which operate under the Ministry of Education, Sports, Science, Technology and Education might also be translated as preschool. Therefore, to avoid confusion I use the Japanese name (*hoikuen*) in this article.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) centers are of interest to anthropologists as sites where children learn to become culturally appropriate members of groups who engage in complex social interactions as they transition from home to social life (Ben-Ari, 1996; Peak, 1989; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009). The routines, formal and unspoken policies, and pedagogical approaches of ECEC centers reflect the changing values of the culture broadly and the context of the site more specifically. Therefore, studies of the quotidian practices of ECEC centers elucidate both values characteristic of the larger culture and those of a particular context at that point in time. The practices of transitions are one such quotidian routine, and while many of the findings this paper align with or compliment findings in previous ethnographic studies of ECEC in Japan, I also note occasions when they diverge, adding diversity to the accounts that have been previously described.

Transitions like that of the opening example are made up of multiple routines. Among these routines some of the most common are procedural routines marked by sequences of set ordered actions such as procedures for cleaning up from lunch and washing hands; spatial routines such as the rearranging of the classroom layout (e.g., setting out or removing tables, chairs, and barriers) or moving bodies from one space to another (e.g., moving indoors to outdoors or from the play space to the nap space); and routines marked by materials such as changing clothes before/after nap or getting out toys, books, or craft supplies for different activities during the day. These routines serve practical purposes.

Another type of transition routine is marked by the calling of children's names one-by-one or by *kumi* (class or small group) names. In the scene above, we saw the calling of *kumi* names serving the purpose of controlling who had first access to the class's current favorite outdoor toy, tricycles. Here it served a practical organizational purpose, but in many other cases, the purpose of calling names as a routine was much less transparent. While other transition routines accomplished the tasks of moving things and people from one location to another, cleaning up, or setting up, the routines marked by calling children by name, in many cases, ostensibly served little practical purpose. Though not strictly necessary to accomplishing the tasks of transition, they took up relatively quite a lot of time and were certainly not efficient if one considers the purpose of transitions in only practical terms. Rather they appeared to serve as a ritual marking or formalizing border between transitions and activities. I follow Giovagnoli's (2018) characterization of rituals as the shared practices that take on meanings within an institution: "They serve the important function of creating social spaces in which individuals can share emotions, experiences, values, norms, and knowledge" (2018, p. 184). In this paper I explore this routine of calling children's names or *kumi* names as transition ritual attending to the characteristics of the rituals and the meanings they hold for practitioners as part of the social life of the focal *hoikuen*.

Rather than thinking of transitions as something to be hurried through to minimize wasted time, by looking at their ritual purposes we might conceptualize them as opportunities for children and teachers to "share emotions, experiences, values, norms, and knowledge" (Giovagnoli, 2018, p. 184). Certainly, institutional routines and rituals can serve to control behavior in a way "in which children's bodies are subject to diffuse uses of disciplinary power to render them docile" (Burke & Duncan, 2015, p. 124), but group rituals may also have the potential to be sites of "we" sharing, which can be affirming and even joyous events (e.g., Liu & Tobin, 2018). Here I am guided by Ben-Ari's (1997) observations about the tension in which children are controlled “by embodying personal time *and* organizational time” in which “the individual bodily rhythms of sleeping and eating are gradually synchronized with the tempos of the preschool” but also recognizes that “the children are not only controlled but also come to feel comfortable in the parameters of such time reckoning” (p. 143). His words here most reflect the observations of the *hoikuen* experience as I observed in my fieldwork. However, by thinking with the notion of *aida* (betweenness), we might extend his observations by moving away from descriptions of tensions between group and self toward notions of different selves in different contexts.

My analysis suggests that the rituals during transition times are not simply routines of bodily discipline that require compliance to rules and expectations to subdue or produce “good Japanese children” who will become “good Japanese workers.” Instead, I suggest the routine of calling children’s names during transitions are linguistic and bodily rituals of being in-*between* both literally (the time between activities) and in the sense of the Japanese emic notion of *aida*[5] (間; in-betweenness or spatial, temporal, and/or interpersonal relationality). This betweenness in the sense of *aida* does not necessarily require a loss, control, or subduing of self to the group, organization, or institution. Rather it provides a way to conceptualize what Ben-Ari (1997) refers to as the “synchronization with tempos” that both control and are experienced as comforting (p.

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[5] The notion of *aida* (which can also be read *ma*) is used in everyday conversation in Japanese (with such diverse uses in conversation as “the book is between the sofa and the lamp,” “she landed the timing on that joke,” and “they don’t get along well”/ ‘things aren’t good between them”). This notion has also been taken up in Japanese philosophy, in particular by 20th century phenomenologist Watsuji Tetsurō and contemporary psychiatrist and phenomenologist Kimura Bin. For Watsuji, *aidagara* (betweenness, relational interconnection) is the foundation of ethics (1945/2011), and for Kimura Bin *aida* (betweenness, interrelationality) is fundamental to being a self and the world (1982/2011). For further reading, see for example, translations of Watsuji’s and Kimura’s works in *Japanese philosophy: A sourcebook* (Heisig, Kasulis, & Maraldo, 2011) and *Watsuji Tetsuro’s global ethics of emptiness: A contemporary look at a modern Japanese philosopher* (Sevilla, 2017).

143) and includes a notion of relational self—one that is always emergent between (among) the self and other/milieu/group (e.g., Kimura, 1982/2011).

Methods

This paper is part of a larger ethnographic study of transition times at the focal *hoikuen*. My research method combined two uses of video: microanalysis and video-cued interviews. I visited the three youngest classes at the center one to two times a week most weeks between September 2019 and February 2020. Though my participant observation was originally planned to span a year, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented further fieldwork in 2020. During these six months of fieldwork, I filmed the whole day across two days in each of the three youngest classes in October and November. I used this video as data for micro-analysis (Tobin & Hayashi, 2015) of transition times. I also edited the approximately 40 hours of film footage into a 10-minute video featuring a series of short scenes of various types of transitions in each of the classes. I then conducted two video-cued ethnographic interviews (Adair & Kurban, 2019; Tobin, 2019) with the lead teachers of the focal classes and the preschool director. In the first interview we watched the video together and discussed the teachers' impressions of the transitions. In the second interview, I brought transcriptions of our previous interview, and the teachers re-watched the video, read the transcript, and added additional notes and clarification where they felt their meaning was unclear in the transcript.

My analysis explores the temporality (*ma*, 間) and relationality (*aida*, 間) of the rituals of calling and being called, examining timbre, voice pitch, facial expressions, bodily movements, spatial arrangements, and the linguistic and pedagogical functions of the practice within the transition. I employed a frame-by-frame microanalysis of the video data (Tobin & Hayashi, 2015) to attend to embodiment, transcribed and took measurements of the utterances in the transitions to facilitate linguistic analyses of the transition times, and conducted video-cued ethnographic interviews (Adair & Kurban, 2019; Tobin, 2019) to elicit the teachers' interpretations of these practices. Linguistic analyses of utterances were conducted using PRAAT (Boersma & Weenink, 2022) and included measures of voice pitch and duration.

Kansai Hoikuen

Classes at Kansai Hoikuen are determined by the age of children at the start of the school year (April), and members of the class remain the same throughout the year, moving up to the next class together the following year. Children in the youngest class (*hiyoko gumi*; chick class) must be at least six months and younger than one year at the beginning of the year. On official documents they are labeled the "zero"-year-old class. Similarly, children in the one-year-old class (*ahiru gumi*; duck class) have turned one by the beginning of the school year, children in the two-year-old class (*usagi gumi*; rabbit class) were between two and three years of age at the beginning of the year, and so on. At the time of fieldwork and filming (approximately halfway through the year), most children in each of the three focal classes had reached their birthdays and were one, two, or three years of age respectively. However, each class had children at both older and younger ends of the range.

Kansai Hoikuen is a privately operated center located in a low- to moderate-income district of Osaka, Japan and is one of several public and private ECEC centers available in the community. Both the enrollment process and the cost of daycare in public and privately operated *hoikuen* is equivalent and set by the local municipality. Children attending Kansai Hoikuen spend 6 to 10 hours a day there 5 or 6 days a week. The lead teacher and assistant teacher in each class were the same teachers every day except during early/late care times and on Saturdays, which were covered by a rotating staffing schedule. Additional assistant teachers floated between classes as needed during the day. In general, children were taught by different teachers each year, and the teacher/assistant teacher pairing changed year-to-year as well.

Three Transitions: Calling Each Child

In the following section I draw on film data from two classrooms and a whole-center assembly to describe three transition times adding in notes from fieldwork, teachers' voices from interviews, and linguistic analyses. The first transition scene is of the youngest classroom (*hiyoko gumi*) as they transition into lunch time. The second transition scene explores the beginning of morning assembly, an event that occurs on Monday and Thursday mornings and involves the entire *hoikuen*. The third transition scene focuses on the one-year-old class (*ahiru gumi*) as they transition to nap time after lunch.

Transition 1: Getting Ready for Lunch in *Hiyoko Gumi*

At 10:55 a.m. the *hiyoko gumi* class is finishing up getting diaper changes, washing hands, and seating themselves around two tables for lunch. Part of transitioning to lunch and snack requires donning bibs. Each child's family brings a set of home-sewn oversized bibs for each meal of the day (two snacks and lunch) that can be pulled over the child's head. Holding the bibs in one hand, lead teacher of the infant class, Tada-sensei, calls out "Tanaka Kenta-san[6]" to one of the boys seated at the table, waiting a moment for him to respond. Kenta raises his hand high and says "*hai*"[7] (Figure 2.1).

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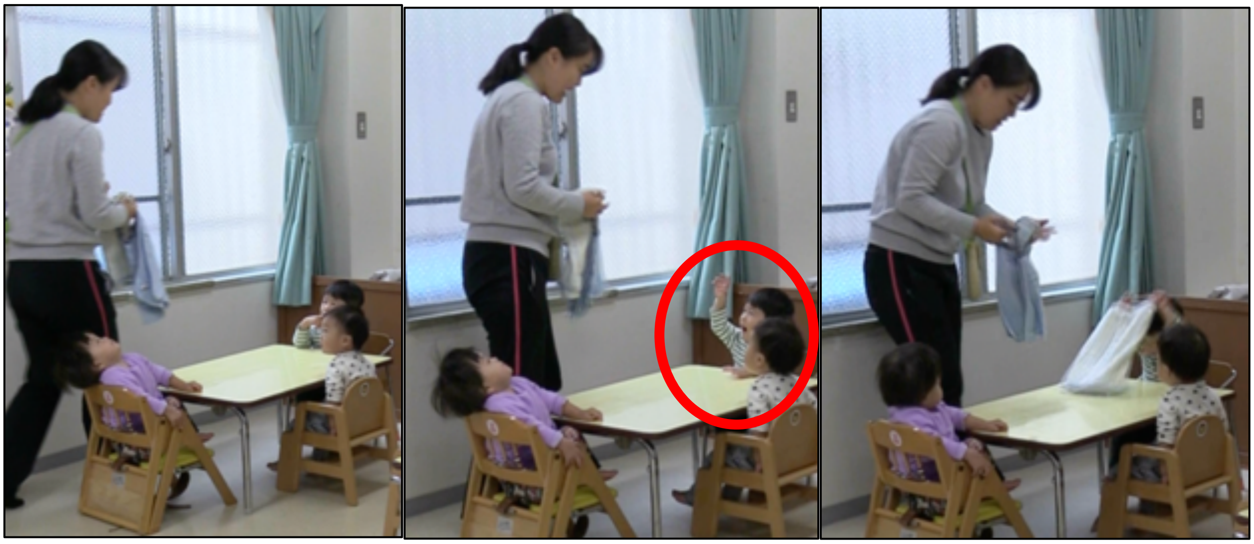
[6] The gender-neutral title *san* is commonly translated in English as "Ms./Mr.," children are often addressed by this title during roll call and other formal routines. *San* may also be added to group or class names.

[7] "*Hai*" is translated as "yes" in English. However, it can also take on functional meanings akin to "I'm here," "that's me," and "my/our turn," for example.

Figure 2.1

Kenta Responding and Putting on His Bib



After watching a similar scene in one of the older classes' video clips, the *hiyoko gumi* lead teacher, Tada-sensei, commented that they spend a lot of time calling children's names one-by-one in different transition activities, especially at the beginning of the year. When prompted, she explained that it's fundamental to building a relationship with each child, helping the child to feel safe and cared for at daycare. Tada-sensei stressed that it doesn't matter if the children respond in the expected way or not. Director, Saitō-sensei, then chimed in that children's sense of being able to be "themself" at daycare is not something to be taken for granted. She explained that teachers, with all the tasks they need to accomplish in the day, see children as a group—*them*. This is inevitable, even with a small class size, so taking time to establish a close relationship with children takes purposeful pause and planning—calling each child's name numerous times a day, for example.

> *Of course you can't tell infants and toddlers 'I'm a good person who will take care of you,' and expect to build trust. You have to show them, and [calling their names like this] is the most important way we do that.*

It should be noted that Saitō-sensei and Tada-sensei are not referring to calling children's names to give directives or redirections when they describe establishing a relationship and child's sense of being themself. They are specifically referring to rituals built into the day that help children establish these feelings. These are the times they feel connection or *betweenness*—a self within the group. Neither Tada-sensei nor Saitō-sensei see "selfness" as something outside of the relationship with their teacher or the class. Instead see this as both a self and self-other (*aida*) building activity.

It is noteworthy that one might expect this sort of activity to include calling children by their names in a familiar way—calling them by their first name or nickname. In fact, the children are called by their nickname or first name most of the time throughout the day (e.g., the child above was often called Ken-chan[8] or Kenta-kun at other times in the day). Here, however, they are called by their full name and given the honorific title "san." This marks this interaction as a more formal event—a ritual—something that is not simply an extension of other times they are called throughout the day, but an event marked by formal linguistic and embodied characteristics that set it apart. Drawing on the work of psychologist Doi Takeo, Tobin (1992) notes that this sort of formal ritual in ECEC helps young children develop a self that has both familiar/rear (*ura*) and social/forward (*omote*) facing consciousness.

Not Ready Yet

As Kenta pulls on his bib, Tada-sensei turns toward Mia sitting at the opposite end of the table, calling out: "Satō Mia-san." Mia doesn't respond, so Tada-sensei turns to Yūta (Figure 2.2). Her call, "Itō Yūta-san," is responded to with a semi-raised hand slightly behind his head and "*hai*." Rather than placing the bib on the table for Yūta to pull on by himself, she helps him get started by placing it on his head. While Yūta finishes pulling on his bib by himself, Tada-sensei turns her attention back to Mia. She calls "Satō Mia-san" again in the same tone as the previous two attempts just as Mia starts to climb out of her chair (Figure 2.2).

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[8] *Chan* and *kun* are diminutive forms with a similar though less formal meaning as *san*. They are most typically used with children outside of one's family, among friends of the same age, or toward younger schoolmates. *Chan* is used both with young boys and girls. *Kun* is used most often with boys, but it is also used occasionally with adults in a work setting toward younger employees of any gender.

Tada-sensei sets down the bib and repositions Mia in her chair. As she is still bent over from this action, she picks up Mia's bib again, and as she holds it ready to put on, she says again "Satō Mia-san." Mia responds by shaking her head side to side a few times (Figure 2.3), and Tada-sensei folds the bib and saying "I guess you don't want lunch. I got it" and walks away to get her own apron. Telling the class "Lunch today is *karaage* (fried chicken)" in an upbeat tone, she walks back to the group and buttons her apron. "We also have Yūta's favorites: cabbage and tomatoes." She bends down, picking up Mia's bib saying once again in the same tone "Satō Mia-san." This time (though off camera because I was forced to move positions in the room to make way for lunch) Mia responds "*hai*" and gets assistance putting on her bib.

Figure 2.2

Mia's First Response to Being Called

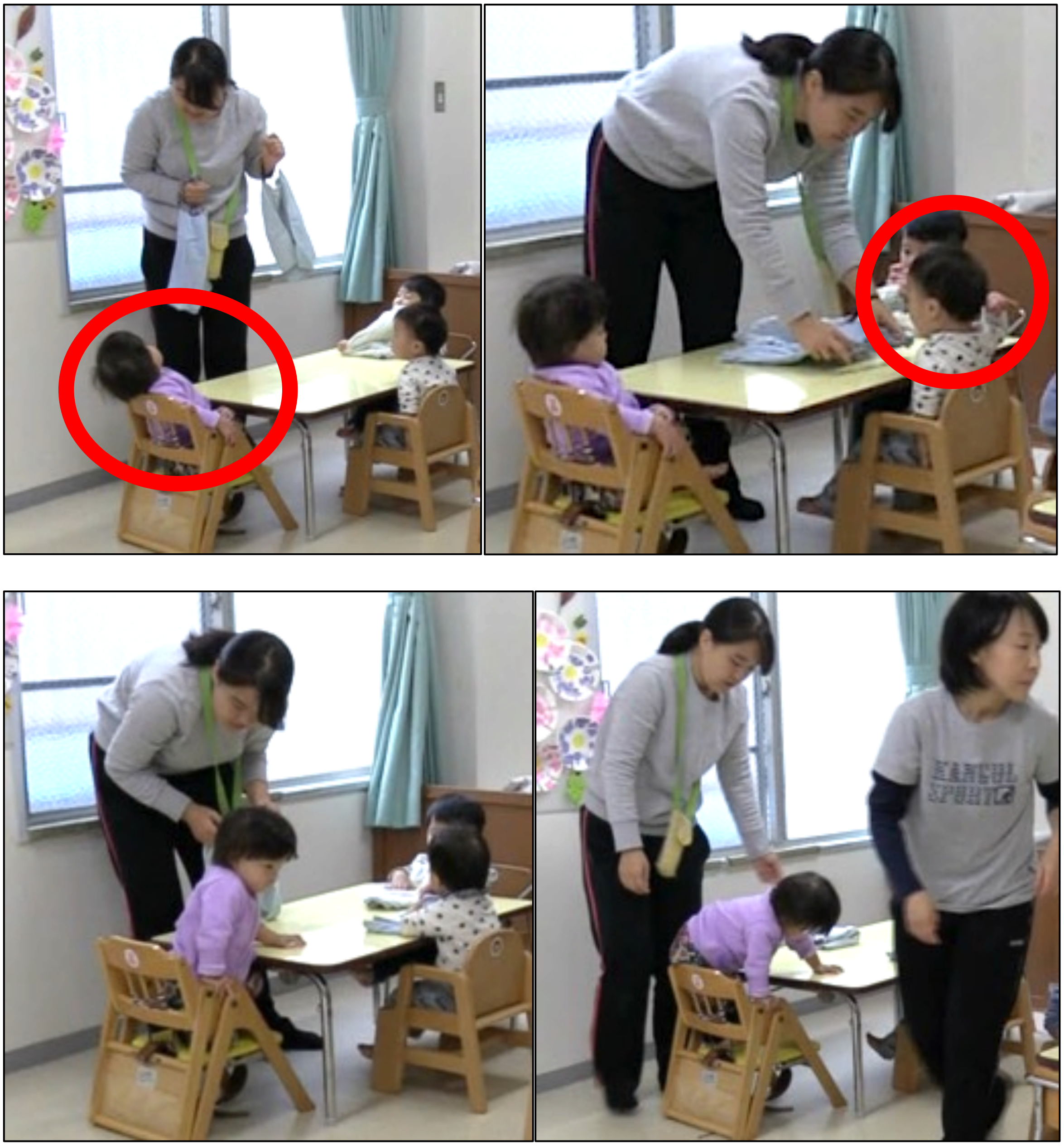
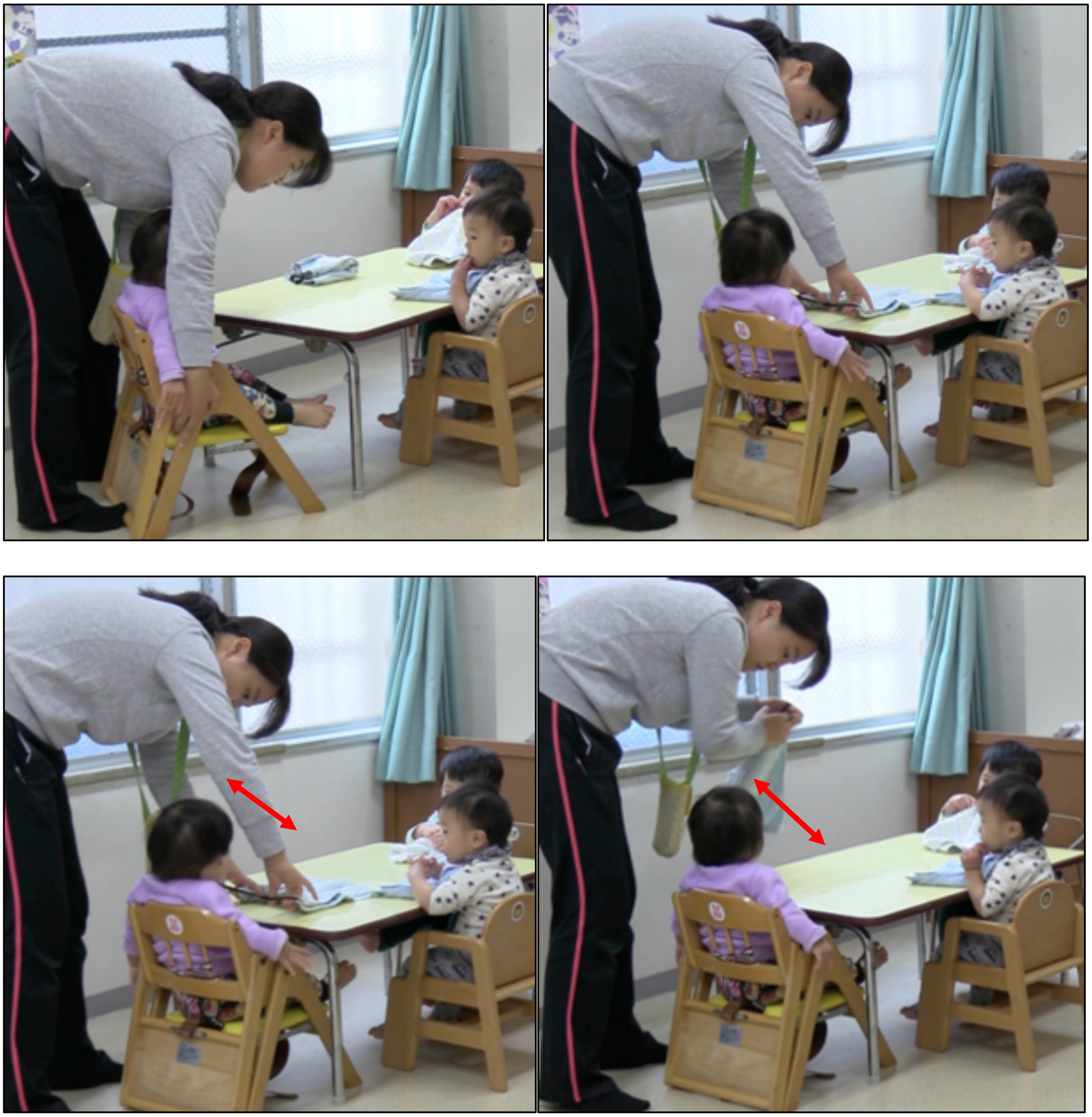


Figure 2.3

Mia Shaking Her Head



Once the children had finished lunch and transitioned to nap, I asked Tada-sensei about Mia in this interaction. Her interpretation was that Mia was expressing first her resistance to and then her readiness for lunch. Tada-sensei noted that it's important for children's actions like this to be respected as communication rather than be seen as non-compliance. She smiled as she told me that she thought a reminder that they were having *karaage* for lunch might be tempting. It is noteworthy that Mia's bib was not placed on her when she didn't participate in the ritual nor was she scolded. She was given multiple opportunities until she was ready to participate. Mia watched other children put their bibs on and the teacher put her apron on, and she heard about the menu for lunch.

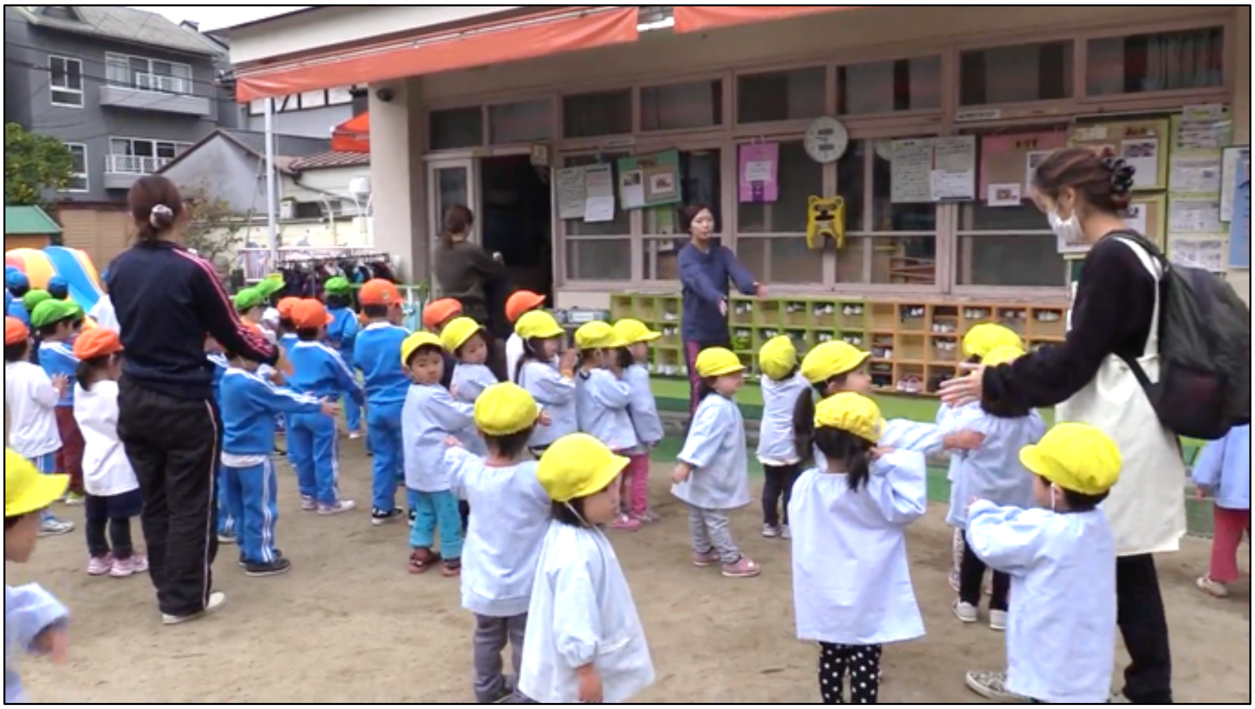
In our focus group interview, Saitō-sensei mentioned that one of the reasons they take turns calling each child's name as they transition into a new activity is that it builds *iyoku* (motivation/willingness). As Saitō-sensei sees it, it's important for children to watch what others are doing to build the *iyoku* to be a part of what is going on rather than forcing compliance. It's a chance to feel part of a group (one sense of *aida*, interpersonal betweenness) and to build the desire to join in what the group is doing. In fact, this kind of group—one that experiences both fun and difficult activities, routine and special times together—is called *nakama* in Japanese (仲間). The first character, "naka" means "inside" and the second character, "*ma*," in *nakama* is the same character used to write *aida*/*ma* that implies spatial, temporal, and interpersonal betweenness as discussed in the introduction to this paper. Observing others from the periphery of an interaction is a valued pedagogical opportunity in Japan. In their discussion of pedagogies of peripheral participation in Japanese ECEC, Hayashi and Tobin (2015) write that these "situations emphasize group learning and group participation" (p. 69) that "help individuals become full, appropriate, contributing members of a community" (p. 70). In other words, the performance of the ritual is not only for the child being called, but it is for the onlookers as well.

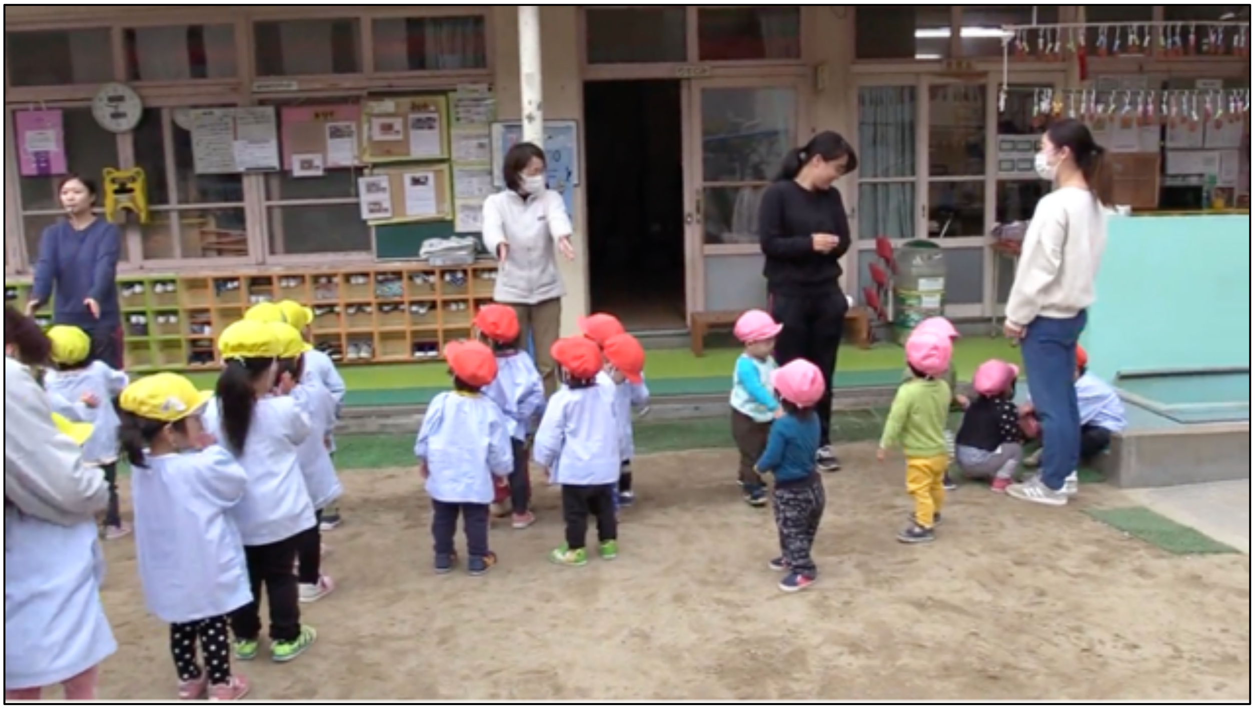
There is an apparent inconsistency here as the teachers have explained this ritual both in terms of fostering a sense of self as an individual among the group and also in helping children build a willingness to be part of the group in the routine. This might be interpreted as a contradiction—an effect of post hoc interpretations of events that the teachers typically don't attend to in the moment they are lived. However, it might also be recognized as the innate nature of *aida*ness. To want to be recognized as oneself and to want to be part of a group are not opposing ideas as the self in Japanese language as *self* is always in relation to others, as captured by the term "*aida*." In fact, Japanese phenomenologist Watsuji Tetsurō, builds much of his argument of ethics around the idea of the word for human (*ningen*, 人間) as inherently being relational with the first character of the word representing person and the second *aida* (betweenness/relationality).

Transition 2: Starting the Morning Assembly on the Playground

Figure 2.4

Morning Assembly





At 9:45 a.m. the older classes are gathered in loose lines on the sandy playground for one of their twice-weekly morning assemblies. The younger classes put on their shoes and join in a few at a time as their small groups finish toileting/diaper changes. As energetic music plays in the background, the teacher assisting with assembly that day has her whistle out rhythmically making two sharp blows and then demonstrating holding hands straight out in front for two counts (see the teacher in the dark gray sweatshirt in front of the children in Figure 2.4).

This practice of lining up is common in schools in Japan. Often elementary school students are given the command *mae narae* (line up with those in front of you), and the children hold their hands straight out in front of them to measure the appropriate distance between themselves and others in their line. At Kansai Hoikuen, the lines are interpreted loosely, especially in the youngest three classes[9]. No sharp *mae narae* command is given. Instead, after the whistle's two counts, the other teachers cheerfully chant *mae* ("in front"). In Figure 2.5, the front lefthand group of children in *usagi gumi* (the two-year-old class in yellow hats) can be seen practically hugging each other as they stretch out their arms or hold their arms in rather than stretching them out.

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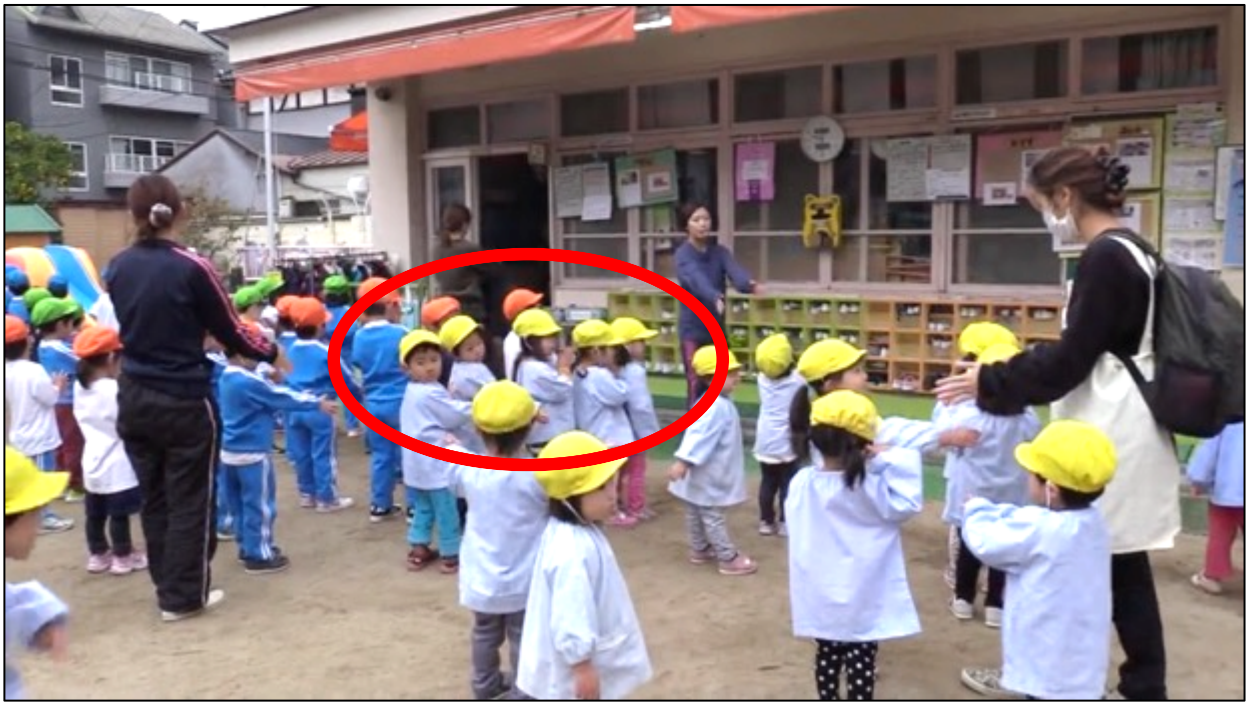
[9] While often *hoikuen* are more relaxed than more formal kindergartens and certainly more relaxed than schools, Kansai Hoikuen might lie on the looser end of the spectrum of ECEC in Japan when it comes to eliciting orderliness among the children (see for example the discussion of straight lines at daycare in Japan in Burke and Duncan's comparative ethnography (2015, p. 119).)

Figure 2.5

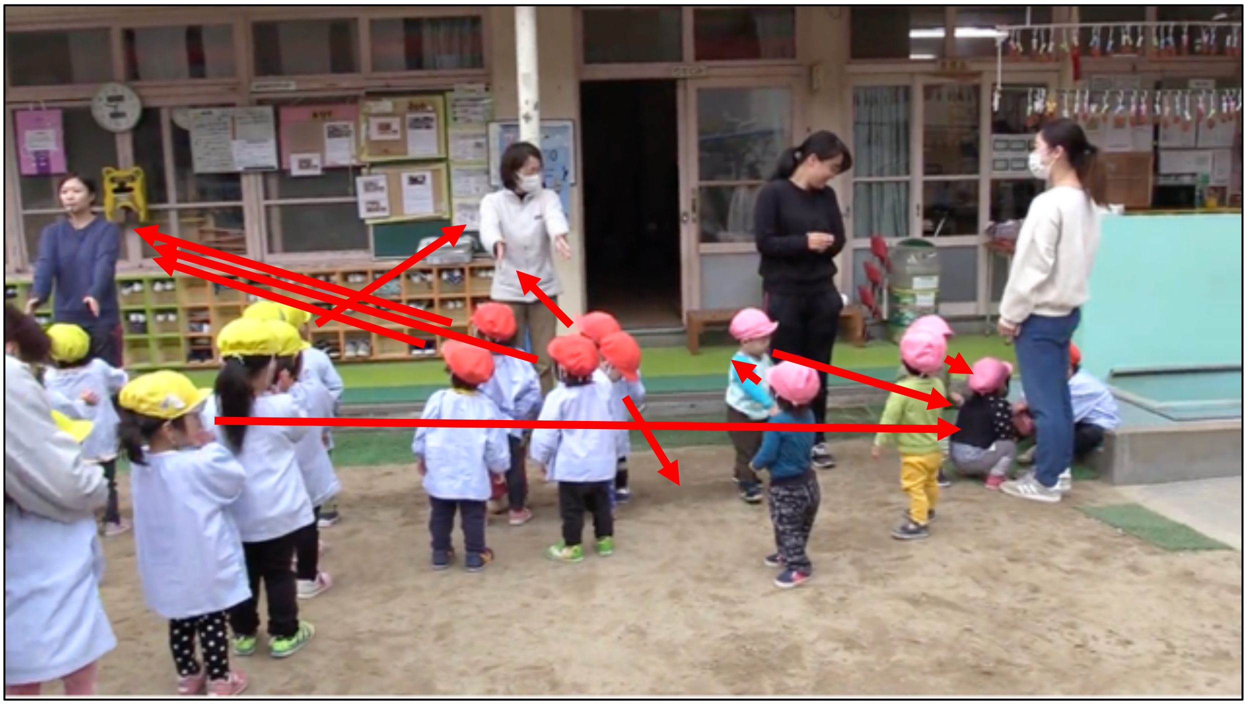
Loosely Lining up for Morning Assembly



As her group joins in on the playground, the *ahiru gumi* lead teacher (also the leader of assembly that morning), Ono-sensei, joins the other teachers in modeling holing her hands in the correct position as a model for the younger classes (in the white fleece jacket in Figure 2.6). The *hiyoko gumi* (in the pink hats) teachers, Tada-sensei (black sweatshirt in Figure 2.6) and Abe-sensei (white sweatshirt in Figure 2.6), alternate overseeing the *ahiru gumi* children getting their shoes on as they come out to the playground, modeling for the younger classes, and attending to children in their class who are fussy or wandering off. Other teachers and assistant teachers wander through their classes and neighboring class lines modeling *mae* arms and gently repositioning children when they wander too far away from their class lines. Some children participate, others watch, and still others wiggle and jump around a bit in the general area of their class or let their gaze wander among the different clusters of activity (Figure 2.6). After approximately three minutes of this, *ahiru gumi*'s lead teacher, Ono-sensei, takes out her microphone and announces they would break their usual order and sing a few songs while they wait for the rest of *ahiru gumi* (the one-year-old class in red hats) to finish arriving.

Figure 2.6

Scattered Gaze While Lining up for Morning Assembly



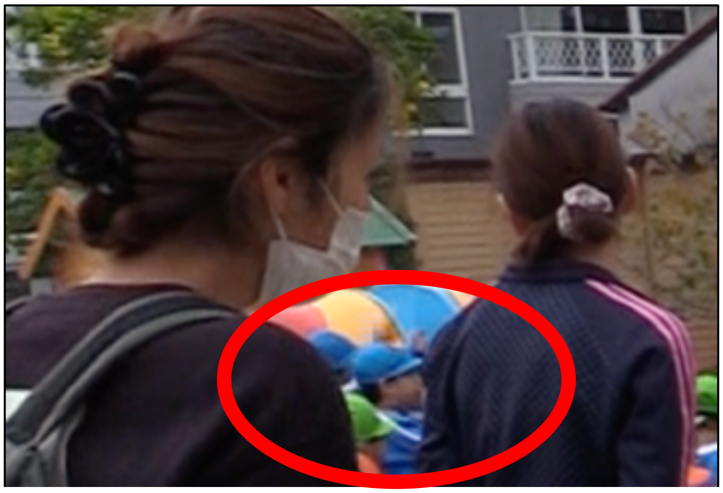
Calling Each Class

As they sing Japanese renditions of their winter-themed songs of the month, “Jingle Bells,” “Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer,” and “Santa Claus is Coming to Town,” the rest of *ahiru gumi* arrives, and the lead teacher starts the ritual of taking attendance by calling each class name to mark the beginning of the assembly. In a quick, business-like clip, she calls out "*zō gumi san*" (elephant class; the five-year-old class in blue hats) and the class responds with a sharp "*hai*" (present; see Figure 2.7 for images of each class's response). In a similar tone she calls out "*kirin gumi san*" (giraffe class; the four-year-old class in green hats), and they respond followed by "*risu gumi san*" (squirrel class; the three-year-old class in orange hats) and their response. Slowing her tempo a bit and exaggerating her enunciation slightly, she calls out "*usagi gumi san*" (rabbit class; the two-year-old class in yellow hats) and when they respond loudly with their "*hai*," she praises them saying "*o, sugo::i*" ("oh, impressive"). In a slow, sing-song tone as she walks closer to the youngest two classes she calls out "*ahiru gumi san*" (duck class; the one-year-old class in red hats), and they respond. Then looking at the youngest group, she prepares them by saying "last we have the cute, cute…" but then accidentally calls "*ahiru gumi san*" again. Laughing at her mistake, she calls again "*hiyoko gumi san*" (chick class; the "zero-"year-old class in pink hats). *Hiyoko gumi* teacher Tada-sensei, in an equally cheerful, lilting voice responds "*hai*" raising her hand. A few of the children in the class also raise their hands. Some looked at Ono-sensei leading assembly and others look at their teachers, Tada-sensei and Abe-sensei. Still others are not visibly attending to the protocol at all (see Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7

Calling Attendance During Morning Assembly

Zō Gumi (Blue Hats)

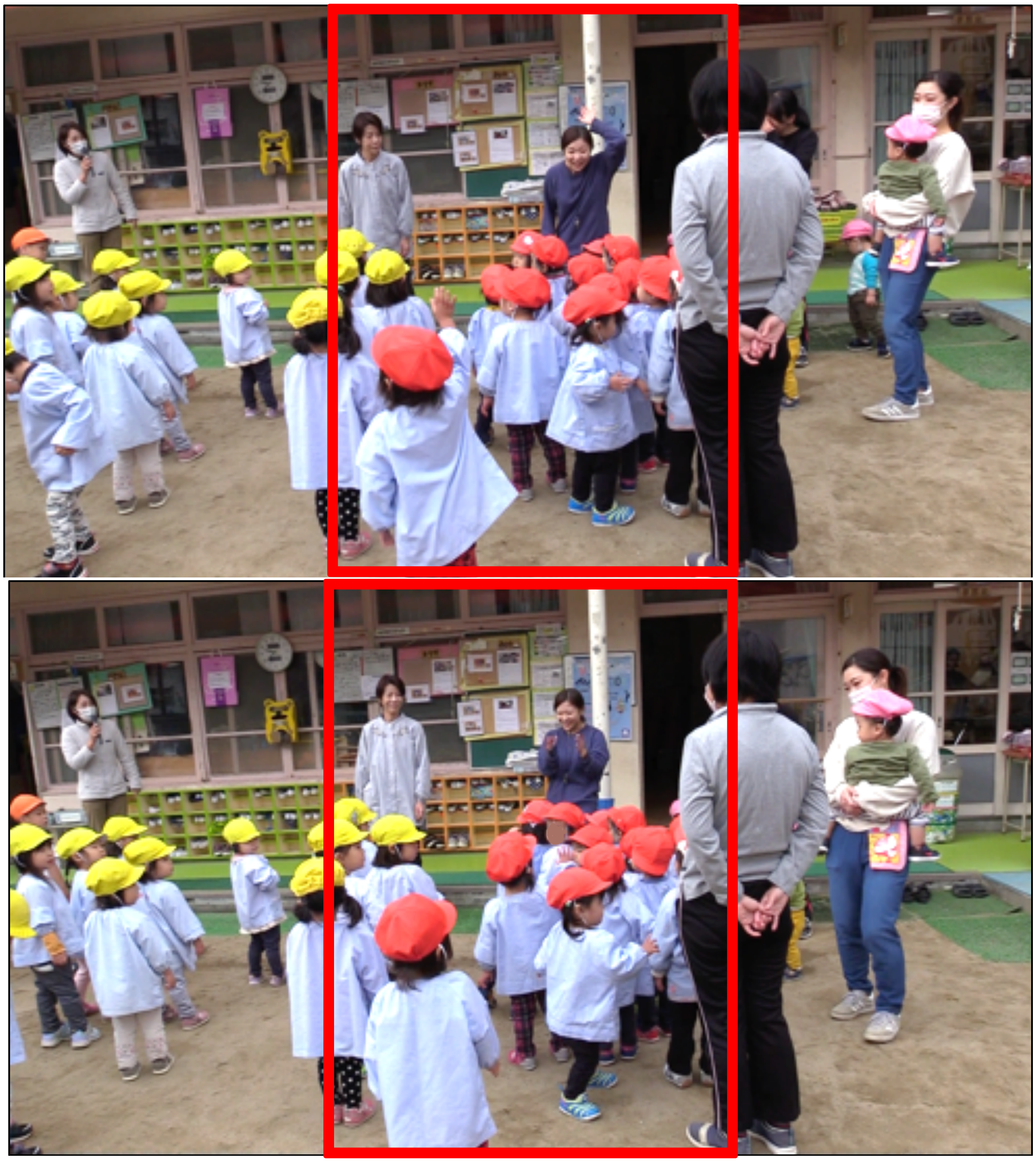


Kirin Gumi (Green Hats)

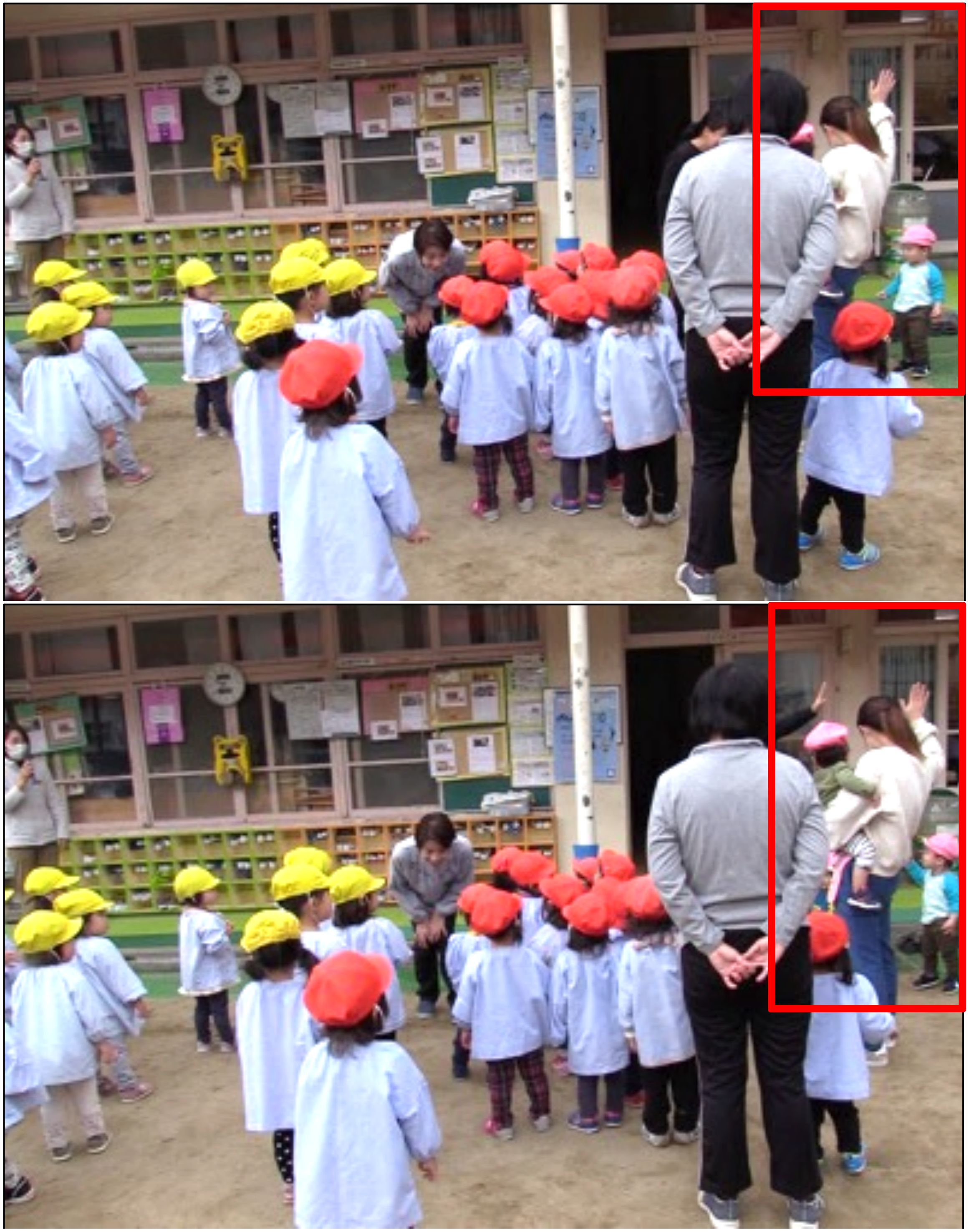
Risu Gumi (Orange Hats)

Usagi Gumi (Yellow Hats)

Ahiru Gumi (Red Hats)



Hiyoko Gumi (Pink Hats)



During the process of calling each group, children engaged in a variety of responses, younger children watched teachers and older children, older children watched the younger children, children let their eyesight wander across the playground or look at the camera. Teachers moved within and between classes, sometimes giving a prompt to children to direct their gaze forward or move closer to their class and sometimes modeling responses for the smaller children. One teacher asked a child if he were going to show off for the camera. In fact, most children in the younger classes did not stand in line nor did they raise their hands, yet no overtly negative verbal directives were audible in the video. On the contrary, each of the three youngest classes were praised for their responses. Ono-sensei verbally praised *ugagi gumi* for their loud response ("*o, sugo::i*"), one of the older class teachers assisting with the assembly stood and modeled in front of *ahiru gumi* and clapped after their response (Figure 2.7), and Tada-sensei praised her class with a "*yoku dekita!*" ("nice job!") after their response.

The response seen here is consistent with Tada-sensei's response to Mia's refusal to respond "*hai*" and put on her bib for lunch in *hiyoko gumi*. Tada-sensei explained that teachers intentionally try to limit their directives to children so that they don't end up giving negative directives. She said it's better to be silent than negative most of the time. If fact, as the teachers expressed, doing it "right" is not the purpose of the ritual even though the ritual is a simplified "practice" version of what they will be required to do in elementary school when lining up. Instead, the ritual of calling and responding to class names seems to serve other purposes as well.

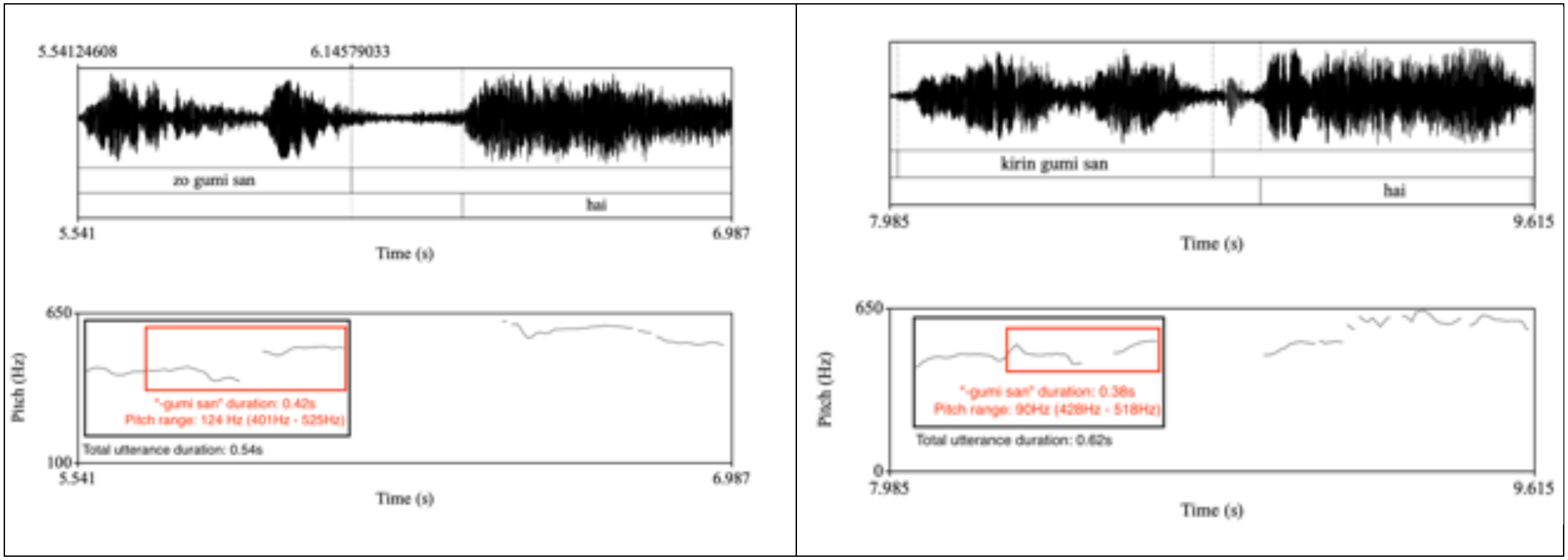
How can we explain the difference between the speaking pace and rhythms of Ono-sensei's way of addressing the older and younger classes during the whole school meeting on the playground versus to how Tada-sensei speaks to the children in *hiyoko gumi*? Tada-sensei address all of the children (even though they are members of the youngest class) in a quick, formal tone when calling their names for lunch. Whereas Ono-sensei shifts her speaking rate and quality significantly from quick and formal with the older classes to song-like and slow with the younger classes. I suggest that this not because Ono-sensei, underestimates what the younger groups are capable of. Ono-sensei doesn't use a slow sing song-y voice when addressing children in her own class individually (as we will see in Transition 3 below). Instead, it might imply that identifying oneself as a group member might require even more clearly marked rituals than identifying oneself by name, at least for the youngest groups—a different *ma* (duration/rhythm of betweenness).

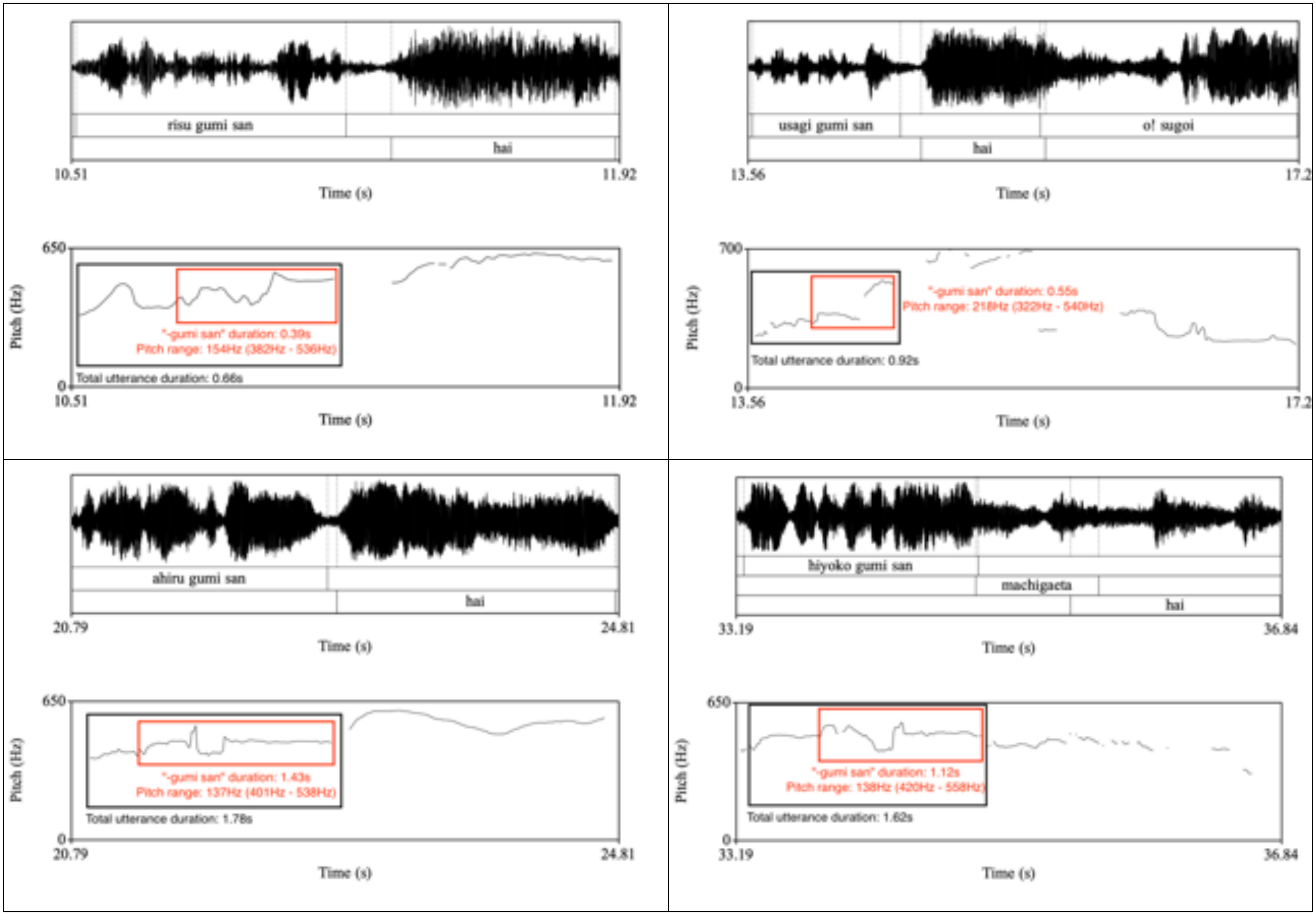
I show this shift in voice pitch in Figure 2.8. When we speak, we generate sound energy at many frequencies, but what we perceive as voice pitch is a band of sound energy produced as we speak called the fundamental frequency (F0) measured in Hertz (Hz), the unit of frequency (cycles/second). I used the speech analysis program PRAAT (Boersma & Weenink, 2022) to trace changes in F0 across time. This is represented by the lines in the lower image in the figures below. Because my audio is taken on the playground with background noise (outdoor noises, other voices), the measurements are not perfect, but an auditory check of the pitch contour (which sounds somewhat like notes on an electric keyboard rather than speech sounds) matched the pitch of the audio track well for the teacher's speech. The F0 trace is synchronized in time with the transcription of what the teacher says in the top half of each image. The last image is a sample of Ono-sensei speaking in her modal voice to other teachers. This can be used as a point of comparison.

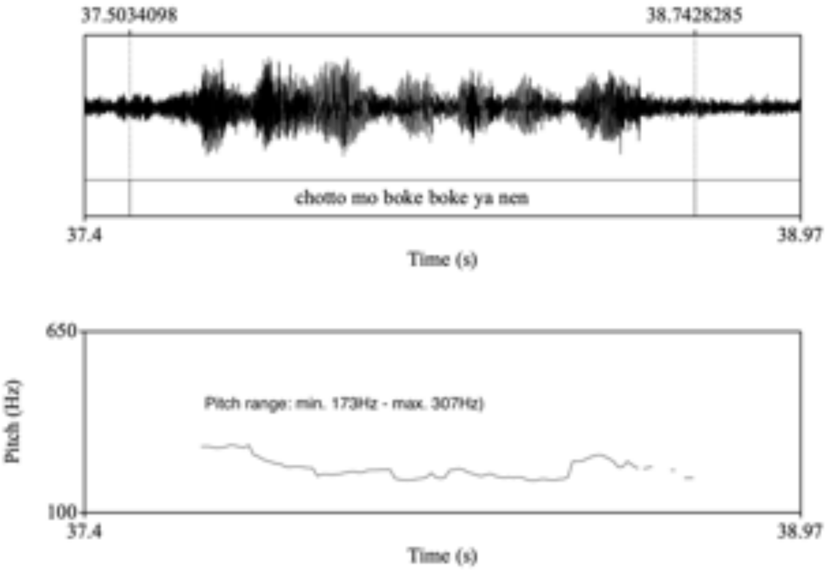
Looking at the utterances below, Ono-sensei's pitch is much higher (see the pitch range numbers in Figure 2.8) when she addresses the children than her modal (adult-directed) voice. Her pitch pattern has a roughly similar trajectory, though not identical, in all of the utterances calling *kumi* names (a small rise in pitch on "gu," falling pitch on "mi," and higher pitch on "san" that falls slightly at the end in the longer instances) in which she calls class names, whether speaking them quickly or practically singing them in the last two instances. The first three older classes were spoken at similar rate (as measured by the part of the utterance that was consistent for calling all classes; "-*gumi san*" in milliseconds (ms); see the duration numbers in Figure 2.8), but the three youngest classes were significantly slower. *Usagi gumi* was at a rate between the older and the younger classes, but the youngest two classes were called at a rate two to three times slower than the older classes. What seems significant here is not that a teacher would change her voice when talking to different classes or different age students, but that it is done in this ritual only when calling children for their group in this whole-school setting.

Figure 2.8

Voice Pitch and Utterance Duration




risu gumi san
hai
10.51
11.92
Time (s)
650
0
Pitch (Hz)
"-gumi san" duration: 0.39s
Pitch range: 154Hz (382Hz - 536Hz)
Total utterance duration: 0.66s
10.51
11.92
Time (s)
usagi gumi san
o! sugoi
hai
13.56
17.2
Time (s)
700
0
Pitch (Hz)
"-gumi san" duration: 0.55s
Pitch range: 218Hz (322Hz - 540Hz)
Total utterance duration: 0.92s
13.56
17.2
Time (s)
ahiru gumi san
hai
20.79
24.81
Time (s)
650
0
Pitch (Hz)
"-gumi san" duration: 1.43s
Pitch range: 137Hz (401Hz - 538Hz)
Total utterance duration: 1.78s
20.79
24.81
Time (s)
hiyoko gumi san
machigaeta
hai
33.19
36.84
Time (s)
650
0
Pitch (Hz)
"-gumi san" duration: 1.12s
Pitch range: 138Hz (420Hz - 558Hz)
Total utterance duration: 1.62s
33.19
36.84
Time (s)

37.5034098 38.7428285 chotto mo boke boke ya nen 37.4 38.97 Time (s) 650 Pitch (Hz) Pitch range: min. 173Hz - max. 307Hz) 100 37.4 38.97 Time (s)	

Transition 3: Transitioning to Nap in *Ahiru Gumi*

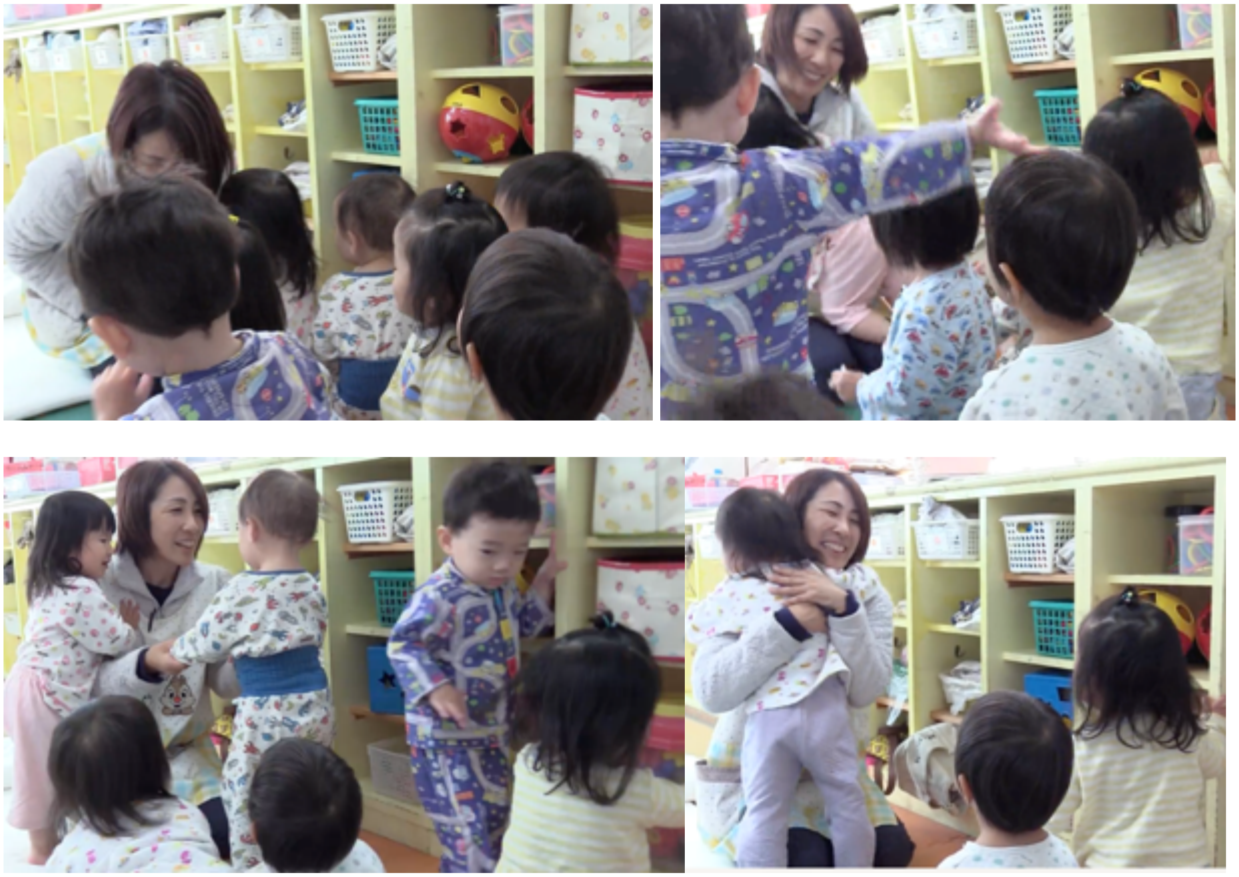
At 12:40 p.m. most of the younger group of children in *ahiru gumi* (the one-year-old class) are seated around their teacher, Ono-sensei, as story time ends and they transition to naptime. A few children who had barely managed to stay awake through lunch were already asleep on their nap mats behind the Ono-sensei, and a small group of older children were on the other side of the built-in cubbies that semi-divided the room having a few more minutes of play time before they read a story with the assistant teacher, Mori-sensei, and transitioned to nap. After the younger group had chatted about the book they had just read, Ono-sensei put down the book saying "The End" in a formal tone and calling the children to say their end of story time *aisatsu* (set expression(s) marking an occasion or time of day) in unison: "Thank you. Let's read together again."

Naptime Aisatsu

Ono-sensei then led the group of younger students in their nap *aisatsu* assuming her formal "teacher" voice again: "Okay, are you ready? Let's say our nap *aisatsu*." The children and Ono-sensei called in unison "Rest well *sensei*. Rest well everyone." As soon as they had finished, however, Ono-sensei began calling each child one by one for a "rest well" and hug before they headed to their nap mats. The (mostly) seated toddlers waited as each child's name was called. Ono-sensei employed a less formal tone and a slower rate than Tada-sensei had done in *hiyoko gumi*'s transition to lunch—perhaps because the addition of a hug invited a less-formal tone to the ritual in this case, but the parts of the ritual were still clearly identifiable. "Rina-*chan*," called the teacher. Rina raised her hand high, smiled and responded with a soft "*hai*" (yes), gave her teacher a hug as they said "rest well" to each other and found her mat for nap (Figure 2.9). This routine repeated for each of the children in the group. A few children stood up waiting for their turn. Rina came back for a second hug, holding on to her teacher's shoulder for a while after. Hayate, who had been playing next to my video camera during the story walked up to Ono-sensei who asked him to sit down and wait for his turn. She called "Ren-*kun*" and then called Hayate next. While she finished calling each child for a hug and "rest well," the children who had already been called found their mats, looking at each other, playing with their blankets, and watching the other children getting hugs (Figure 2.9).

Figure 2.9

Younger Children in Ahiru Gumi Transitioning to Nap



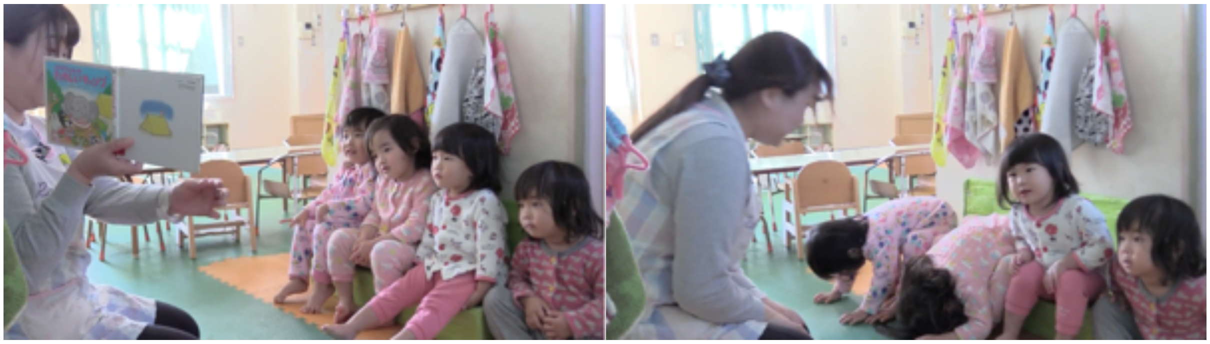
The Older Group

While the younger group finished settling on their nap mats, the small group of older children cleaned up from playing, used the bathroom, and started reading their picture book.

Though they typically sat on the floor to read, on this day the girls in the group were neatly seated in a row on the bench next to the bathroom. In a whispered tone Mori-sensei told the girls, “Let’s say our nap *aisatsu*.” Mori-sensei and the children whispered in unison “Rest well *sensei*. Rest well everyone.” She reminded the class that they had to be quiet as they went to their mats as the younger children were already sleeping (Figure 2.10).

Figure 2.10

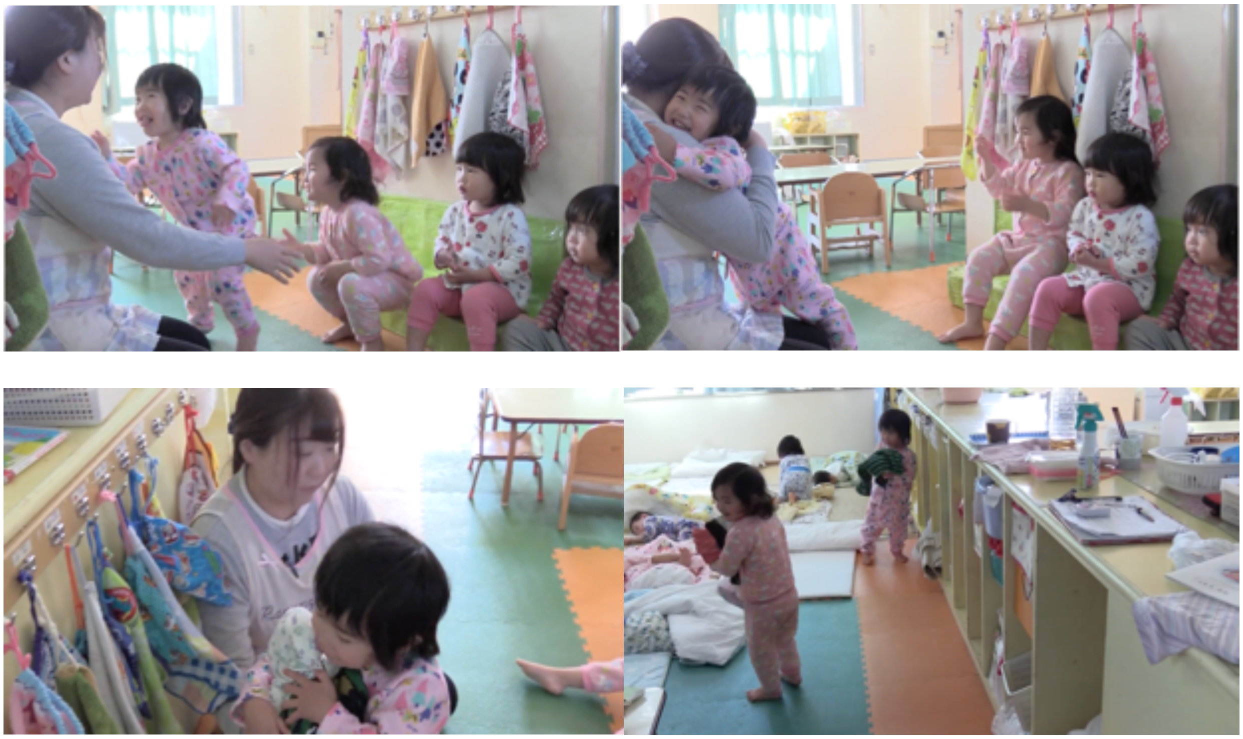
Older Group of Children in Ahiru Gumi Finishing Story Time



Continuing to whisper, she called “Yamada Miyu-*san*,” Miyu bounced once in in her seat before jumping up for her hug (Figure 2.11). After their hug, Mori-sensei directed Miyu toward her change of play clothes and bag with her cloth diaper to put away in her cubby for her caregivers to take home at the end of the day. Mori-sensei whispered, “Can you do it, Miyu-chan?” as Miyu gathering all of her things to be put away. Miyu made her way to the other side of the room with her cubby and the nap mats and put her things away in her “take home” bin before joining the children already sleeping or resting on their mats. The other three girls found their ways to their mats after the same routine on the other side of the room.

Figure 2.11

Older Group of Children in Ahiru Gumi Transitioning to Nap



There is a tension between formality and informality in these rituals along with some individual teacher difference. In general Ono-sensei was a bit more casual than some of the other teachers during these rituals. However, even her more playful tone of voice when calling the children for their hug before nap varied from enough from other times of day to be recognizable as part of the same type of transition ritual. Children recognized it as such, raising their hands and responding "hai" like they did in other transition times with similar rituals of being called.

These rituals are temporal both in the most literal sense of the word (they take up time), but they are also temporal in the sense that they mark cycles in the day and that there are temporal and embodied qualities (*ma*, rhythm/tempo) to the interactions. The teachers take on characteristics of formal language, child-directed voice (high pitch), slower than normal tempo, or quicker than normal tempo. These rituals of calling students by name or *kumi* name are temporally marked as different from other parts of the transition time and mark the border (end/beginning) of activities during the day.

Discussion

Understanding and using the appropriate behavior in each social situation has been described using the emic term *kejime* (e.g., Ben-Ari, 1995; Hayashi & Tobin, 2015), or what is referred to colloquially as understanding the expectations of *TPO* (a Japanese phrase borrowing from the English words “time, place, and occasion”). Rituals not only require particular actions, but they help to mark a change in context (time) that will require different behavior from the previous context (time). Linguistically, the rituals of calling children’s names use the polite forms, which are rarely used in other times of the day among children or between teachers and children. This change in register helps make the change in context clearer for children. They do this by acting as an auditory and embodied moment of tempo change. This change in rhythm is described as *merihari* (rhythm or pace variation) by the teachers, and is similar to Lois Peak’s (1991) observations of order in ECEC in Japan:

> Many times each day, the tempo and tenor of activity fluctuates between a tight and loose structure. Chaotic periods of free play are followed by silent, formal ritual. In Japanese preschools the measure of good discipline is not an overall low level of noise and controlled activity but a quick and precise maintenance between two radically different levels of order. (p. 78)

While in Kansai Hoikuen rituals were rarely silent and orderly, they did provide a significant contrast to the rhythms of other times in the day creating *merihari*. The more formal end of this rhythm pendulum can be described as serving to *hikishimeru* (literally “tighten”) the atmosphere. These moments often involve sound and tempo, and are found in other transition rituals in

Japanese society, such as the closing of an event through a single clap (*ippon jime*; Kawano, 2005) or in the other stylized *aisatsu* (such as set phrases for leave-taking at the end of the work day).

Because they *tighten* (*hikishimeru*), these rituals might easily be interpreted through the lens of control. However, this paper demonstrates that transition *rituals* may serve a purpose that does not necessarily require strict compliance. Though formal, the instances of teachers calling children individually or by their group name were adapted to each child/group of children as can be seen in the change of Ono-sensei's voice addressing the older and younger groups at the beginning of assembly, Tada-sensei's response to Mia's refusal to respond and put on her bib, and Ono-sensei's and Mori-sensei's tone and length of hugs for each of the children before nap. Instead, this code switching between speech registers (a moment to *hikishimeru*) marks different kinds of social relationships among the same group of children and teachers during the day, marking the borders between times such as the start of lunch, the beginning of assembly, and nap time.

The infant and toddler classes I observed are in a daycare rather than preschool setting, serve children birth to three rather than older children, and are in a context with administration who are supportive of a relaxed pace of activities. Other contexts (e.g., ECEC centers in other countries, other types of ECEC centers, other age populations) might have significantly different transition practice needs. While the exact practices of this *hoikuen* might not translate well to other pedagogical contexts, several findings are of interest practitioners and researchers in other educational and care contexts. First, this study showed that attention to the purposes of current transition practices revealed multiple types of transition activities (e.g., procedures, rituals). This study also points to the importance of noticing practices that do and do not require compliance.

There may be practices, like the ritual of calling each child's name at Kansai Hoikuen, that do not require strict compliance in order to have meaning. This study also suggests that rituals at the borders of transition times help demarcate the different times of the day and may help children notice a change in expectations. Likewise, this study indicates that attention to rhythm, especially rhythm change in classrooms, is an area deserving more attention in future research. Finally, and more specific to ECEC in Japan, this study suggests that focusing on early years education (birth to three) might reveal aspects of cultural pedagogical practice that are not as visible or are different from findings from studies with older preschool aged children. This adds to the diversity of perspectives presented in ethnographies of early childhood in Japan.

In concluding, I contrast my findings in this paper with some of those in other ethnographies of ECEC in Japan. Burke and Duncan (2015) describe a scene from their data of Japanese children in a class waiting to be called for their medical checks and continuing to wait until all children in their class had finished. They describe teachers in New Zealand interpreting this scene as a waste of the children's time that could be used in play, a practice that's "not fair on the child" (p. 121). These teachers propose a hypothetical alternate in which children would be called only a few at a time that would limit wait time and would have "a nice flow" (p. 121). They explain a different interpretation from a Japanese perspective drawing notions described by Benedict (1946)—one of children learning to regulate themselves in order to experience the joy of group life. They write, "self-discipline may require practice, but it also makes one's life enjoyable through the social system of reciprocity." Their interpretation does not deny pleasure in being part of the group, but it still assumes that this is a moment of *gaman* or an action that requires practice. The discourses here revolve around a perspective from ECEC in New Zealand (but one which I think might be extended to many other "Western" educational contexts without much stretching) around productivity of time, and in which waiting and watching others is characterized as a “waste” that lacks “flow” and is negative toward children. They present a Japanese perspective in which waiting is a necessary part of group life, one that give the one waiting the rewards of participating in the group. In this perspective, an individual’s time is seen as an investment or sacrifice to which the joy of being part of the group is the return.

While this is certainly one possible interpretation of the Japanese perspective as it relates to the children waiting to be called for their hug before nap or to get their bibs on before lunch, it ignores the possibility that this may not be a moment requiring *gaman* or determination at all. In fact, it seems a stretch to suggest that children who have just turned one or two are not likely to be engaged in much self-discipline for the sake of group harmony. Instead, could there simply be pleasure or interest in watching others, waiting in anticipation for one’s turn, and feeling a part of a group that doesn’t require much if any practice or a subjugating of self at all? In other words, could waiting for one’s turn here be a use of time that is neither a waste nor a transaction investing in some future reward of being part of the group? Could it be both satisfying to the “self” and the “group”?

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CHAPTER 3[10]

AIDA AS RESEARCH METHOD: TOWARD A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING TRANSITION TIMES IN A JAPANESE DAYCARE

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Abstract

This paper explores methods for analyzing and writing up qualitative video ethnographic data in a way that foregrounds complexity and multiplicity. I draw on perspectives Jane Bennett's (2010; 2020) notions of vital materialism and causality of influx/efflux in conversation with Japanese phenomenologist Kimura Bin's (1972; 2005) notions of *aida* (in-betweenness). After briefly examining the ontological assumptions of these concepts, I explore methodological implications for analysis and writing up qualitative research. Specifically, I propose narrative descriptions draw on the linguistic perspective of middle voice in conjunction with and visual representations of assemblages of betweenness (*aida*).

Key words: Qualitative research methods, aida, in-between, betweenness, vital materiality, early childhood education and care, Japan

Introduction

On a warm day in November, the two-year-old class had walked to the local park to pick up some winter-hardy plants donated by a local horticultural group. This outing took a bit longer than normal, and they got back for lunch late. Play time after lunch was slightly shortened and story time was reallocated to after nap to ensure the children could have their full nap time.

Jun[11]*, one of the more active boys in the class, is one of the first to start changing. However, he is also the last to complete the transition from lunch to nap. He observes the bustle in the classroom as he undresses and gets his pajamas on at a glacial pace alternating sitting, standing, and squatting near his cubby. This was not unusual for Jun. Indeed, Jun often goes about tasks in his own way and at his own pace throughout the day and not just during transition times.*

The lead teacher starts the transition time helping children change and then lays out the mats and blankets. The other two assistant teachers alternate assisting children in the bathroom, cleaning, and encouraging children who had been playing with Legos to clean up. Each time one of the teachers walks by Jun, they comment cheerfully. "Keep it up." "You were the first to start, but I wonder if you'll be the last to finish?" "You're almost done folding your shirt. Good job. Don't forget to fold your pants." In the end, the lead teacher sits next to Jun saying "It's nap

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[11] All names are pseudonyms. For the Japanese children, teachers, and scholars I cite in this study, I use Japanese name order (last name, first name). For children I have provided pseudonyms of first names and for teachers last names with the title "sensei" as this is how they are typically referred to at the *hoikuen*.

time now. Let's finish changing and putting away our clothes." At which point he quickly finishes folding his play clothes and puts on his pajamas.

In this scene, we find a two-year-old class in a bit of a rushed transition between lunch and nap in a Japanese daycare (*hoikuen*). I set out at the beginning of my dissertation fieldwork to observe and describe something about temporality and relationality in the quotidian routines of a Japanese *hoikuen*. My methods involved participant-observation that included collecting photo and video data, microanalysis of video (Tobin & Hayashi, 2015), and video-cued ethnographic interviews (Adair & Kurbin, 2019; Tobin, 2019). After a month or so of participant-observation, I decided to focus more specifically on transition times and their routines. I had been struck by the differences between transition routines I had experienced while working as a speech-language pathologist in preschools and kindergartens in the United States, which were often noisy times with many teacher directives, and those of my Japanese field site. Transitions in the focal *hoikuen* were surprisingly quiet (at least on the teachers' part) while still being as equally complicated and busy as those I had observed in the United States. This difference piqued my curiosity.

One of the first challenges in observing and interviewing the teachers at the *hoikuen* about transitions, however, was determining a shared notion of transitions. In the educational literature in English, transitions can be divided into vertical and horizontal transitions (Kagan & Neuman, 1998). Big events, such as the transition from being home fulltime to starting preschool or transitioning from preschool to school, are vertical transitions. More mundane transitions from home to school at the beginning of the day or transitions between different times of day are horizontal transitions. I am interested in the latter in this project, and in everyday conversation with teachers in English the words "transitions" or "transition times" succinctly capture this understood part of the daily routine (horizontal transitions). Yet, I found that I had trouble communicating what it was I wanted to attend to and ask participants about in Japanese. In the educational transition literature in Japan, the phrase *ikō-ki* (transitional period) is often used to indicate vertical transitions such as from kindergarten to school or between school years (e.g., Sakai, 2010). This phrase, however, does not capture the idea of horizontal transitions within the day.

Each of the teachers I talked to seemed to have their own way of describing the transition time: *sukima* (隙間, gap), *aima* (合間, interval), *nanika to nanika no aida no jikan* (何かと何かの間の時間, the time between one thing and another), *ma* (間, time, pause), *sakaime* (境目, border). Though no less time is spent in transitions in *hoikuen* than might be observed in daycares in other nations, the multiplicity of terms to describe this aspect of the preschool day is a less codified notion or a "thing" than it is in English. In our negotiations of what words to use to describe this time, we settled on the descriptive phrase *katsudo to katsudo no aida* (活動と活動の間, between one activity and another) proposed by the lead teacher of the two-year-old class.

The term *aida* used in the phrase *katsudo to katsudo no aida* (between one activity and another) is written with the character 間, but *aida* is only one of many different readings of the character. It can be read as *aida* or *ma* when it stands alone. It can also be read as *ma*, *kan*, *ken* and *gen* in the context of other characters. Typically, *aida* implies more of a spatial and *ma* more of a temporal betweenness, though there are instances of each reading also implying the other. In everyday use, one might use *aida* to describe the location of an object as being between two others (spatial relations), to the closeness in the relationship of two friends (interpersonal relations), or to indicate something that happened recently (temporal relations). One might use *ma* to talk about tempo or pause both literally and figuratively, such as the awkwardness of having a different conversational style as one’s conversation partner (temporal and interpersonal relations) or the pause between sounds or events (temporal relations). *Ma* is also in the traditional names of different rooms and spaces in a Japanese style home, such as the word for alcove (床の間, *tokono**ma***). In other readings of the word in everyday speech, the character 間 is used in the words that describe a space (間, ***kan***; 空間, *kū**kan***) and time (時間, *ji**kan***). This character is used to mark durations of time as in “three-hours long” (*san ji* ***kan***). Quite interestingly, the same character (read as *ma*) is also used in the word for friends in a sense implying fellow members of a shared experience (仲間, *naka**ma***). In the word that is often translated into English as “the world” (世間, *se**ken***), it can have the meanings of society, the public, or relations among those in the community with whom one lives. It is also found in the word for human (人間, *nin**gen,*** *which combines the characters for “human” and “between” or “among”*) that Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō (1899-1960) explored extensively in his work on the ethics of ***aida**gara* (間柄; in-betweenness, relations) in human existence (人間存在, *nin**gen*** *sonzai*).[12]

This one term in its multiple everyday and philosophical uses somehow gets at what we might call in English a sense of “spatio-temporo-relationality” (perhaps even something akin to Karen Barad’s (2003; 2007) “spacetime mattering,” “spatiotemporality,” and “intra-action”), without the awkwardness of needing to invent neologisms, or to force Japanese word-concepts into the English language. I am not suggesting that we don’t have any similar concepts connecting time and space in English; for example, we sometimes describe measurements of duration and length using similar terms (e.g., the tension was palpable during the *long* pause; a marathon is 26.3 miles *long*). This is not an argument for the particularity/uniqueness of this concept to Japan. However, there is something simultaneously more elegant and more accessible in being able to evoke this sense of relationality, temporality, and spatiality in a single word, *aida*. And, there is a long history of philosophy in Japan drawing from this concept that continues today. I have found the work of Japanese psychiatrist and phenomenologist Kimura Bin (1931–)[13] to be particularly helpful to developing a methodology guided by the notion of *aida* to explore transition times.

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[12] For an introduction in English to Watsuji’s ethics see for example, *Japanese philosophy: A sourcebook* (Heisig, Kasulis, & Maraldo, 2011) and *Watsuji Tetsuro’s global ethics of emptiness: A contemporary look at a modern Japanese philosopher* (Sevilla, 2017).

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Kimura's project is phenomenological, asking questions such as "what is it like to be a self?" My own project—to understand something about horizontal transition times in *hoikuen* (daycare)—would probably be seen by Kimura as an attempt to objectify events (being in transition) into observable things (transition times), in line with the Western scientific tradition (see Kimura, 1982/2011). In some sense, the hypothetical Kimura I evoke here would be right—I am not attempting to understand the phenomenological question of what it is like to be in the event of a particular transition. I seek to observe, learn about, and describe something about transitions, which is a kind of *object*ification of those transitions. It would be irresponsible of me to make use of his philosophy without pointing out this important difference. Though the hypothetical Kimura I conjure as I read his work may object to the way I have taken up his ideas, I have found his writing on *aida* to be useful to my own thinking about transitions, and in this paper, after providing some background to the ontological assumptions I make, I explain how two hybrid concepts related to the notion of *aida* have helped me form a methodology for my current study on transition times (*katsudo to katsudo no aida*) in a Japanese *hoikuen*.

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[13] Little of Kimura Bin's work is available translated in English, but where possible I use English language sources. (For translated and related work see also Phillips, 2001; Kimura, 2001; Tellenbach & Kimura, 1979; Tanaka, 2017)

Bringing Philosophes into Conversation: The Post-Human Turn and Japanese Philosophy

There is a growing body of theory and research that challenges the conception of agency as being solely a human/individual ability to act, and instead conceptualizes agency as distributed among entities in complex connections or assemblages, and thus challenging a linear model of cause and effect (Coole, 2013). Many of these theories also challenge the preeminence in research of approaches that are human-centered and language-centered (i.e., focus on linguistic, symbolic, and semiotic analyses), instead arguing for the consideration of nonhuman entities as sharing in agency or having an agentic capacity and for consideration of nonlinear causality. In doing so, these theories also challenge and replace social scientific forms of analysis that are human- and language-centered (i.e., focus on linguistic, symbolic, and semiotic analyses), thus fostering approaches centering on human and nonhuman agentic assemblages. Philosophers working in a range of scholarly traditions who have fostered these kinds of approaches include Gilles Deleuze, Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour, Karen Barad, and Jane Bennett. Researchers who have applied and/or extended these theories to early childhood education include Gunilla Dahlberg (e.g., Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999), Liselott Olsson (2009), Hillevi Lenz Taguchi (2010), and Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw (e.g., Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind & Kocher, 2017).

While significantly shifting conversations in their fields, these theories have also been critiqued for claiming as “new” ideas that have been circulating outside the “West” for millennia (e.g., Sundberg, 2014). As a challenge to the primacy of “Western” theories in academia, there is a now well-established and growing interest across disciplines in the humanities and social sciences in foregrounding theories and methods from outside of Western traditions that challenge both the "newness" of these ideas and add different nuances to the current theoretical discussions that explore ontological questions. Approaches that serve to dismantle the Eurocentrism of Western theorization include, among others, Indigenous Knowledges (e.g., Dei, 2000), Southern Theory (Connell, 2007), Theory from the South (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012), Asia as Method (Chen, 2010), and the ethnographic approaches of anthropologists such as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (e.g., 2009/2014).

Specific to Japan, a rich body of previous anthropological studies has shown how early childhood education centers in Japan have characteristic pedagogical practices—practices that can be connected to underlying cultural practices and beliefs (e.g., Ben-Ari, 1997; Burke & Duncan, 2015; Hayashi & Tobin, 2015; Lewis, 1995; Tahhan, 2014; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009; White, 1987). While these studies have contributed significantly to the fields of the anthropology of Japan and early childhood education, as a whole, this body of literature has been critiqued for relying on Western theories and not taking advantage of what could be gained from employing philosophy and theory from Japan, or more specifically, for using Japan as a case study "other" to the West (e.g., Takayama, 2011).

There is now an established interest in employing non-Western philosophical and theoretical knowledge and continuing attention to research methodologies that value a "non-Western" approach (e.g., Hayashi, 2021; Takayama, 2020). Thinking with theories and methodologies that fall outside of the most frequently cited frameworks has the potential to contribute to larger theoretical conversation by pointing out perspectives that may be absent from or different in nuance to perspectives most prevalent in the English-language literature. In addition, employing non-Western philosophies serves to challenge the notion that theory is developed in the West while the rest of the world serves as cases to test the theory (e.g., Law & Lin, 2017; Morita, 2017).

Japan has a long tradition of philosophical, psychological, and sociological concepts and theories that are both unique to the Japanese context and in already conversation with theories from the West. In recent decades there has been an increased focus in English language scholarship on these contributions of Japanese philosophy (e.g., Davis, Schroeder, & Wirth, 2011; Heisig, 2016; Kasulis, 2018; McCarthy, 2010; Maraldo, 2017; Mayeda, 2006; Morisato, 2016; Sevilla, 2017), including implications for education studies both within and outside of Japan (e.g., Komatsu & Rappleye, 2020; Rappleye & Komatsu, 2016; Sevilla, 2016; Takayama, 2020). However, to my knowledge, these Japanese concepts have not yet been extended to theoretical and methodological frameworks for empirical studies of early childhood even within the Japanese language literature. I cannot claim to be able to make this extension with competence and confidence, or indeed with “authenticity.” It would be an audacious claim indeed, as a non-Japanese researcher, to be applying Japanese theory to Japanese education in a Japanese way when Japanese educational researchers themselves have not applied this work in these ways. Instead, I find myself reading and being challenged and motivated by the thought of thinking with Japanese and Western philosophy and theory alongside learning from the expertise and perspectives of the children and teachers in the cooperating *hoikuen*. Thus, I needed a methodology for exploring transitions that integrates these perspectives. In this paper I draw primarily from the work of United States political theorist Jane Bennett and Japanese psychiatrist and phenomenologist Kimura Bin, not to compare the two in their similarities and differences, but to bring together parts of both of their theories (and the philosophies behind them) in the spirit of bricolage (Lévi-Strauss, 1962/2021) to guide my ethnographic analysis of transition times in the focal *hoikuen*. I do this by first exploring some of the ontological assumptions that underly Kimura's and Bennett's work. I then bring together four concepts (two deriving from Japanese philosophy and two deriving from the Western literature) into two hybrid notions that guide my methodology: *aida*-assemblage and *bamen* (scene/milieu) as middle voice.

Underlying Ontological Assumptions for Kimura Bin's Theory of *Aida* (Betweenness)

The first ontological assumption I draw attention to is foundational to Kimura Bin's philosophy. Kimura was largely influenced by the philosophy of Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945), a noteworthy figure in modern Japanese philosophy. Drawing from arguments in a volume of collected works of Nishida, *Nishida Kitaro Zenshu (Collected Works) 1-19*, Arisaka (2001) discusses two intersecting assumptions in Nishida's philosophy: 1) entities are concrete and 2) they are perspectival. An entity (including self) cannot be a "general" entity, it "must be a concrete acting self in relating to concrete entities in unique spatio-temporal situations" (p. 206). In other words, everything in the world (whether a physical or mental entity) is a specific instance of that entity. The computer I am typing on is not a general 'computer' but a unique instance of the computer at this time, in relation to the act of writing this paper. If asked to imagine typing at a computer, that too will be a specific (concrete) computer. Each instance of computer (or any other entity) will be its own, unique instance of that thing in time and space.

Arisaka's (2001) argument continues with a second assumption in Nishida's thought, his discussion of perspective. Just as entities are concrete, they are relational. There are "a potentially infinite number of 'points of view' from which the thing can be handled, by the particular spatio-temporal position that they occupy" (p. 206). Just as an entity cannot exist outside of its specificity in space and time (it cannot be a generic thing), it cannot exist outside of its relationality with its milieu. Therefore, it is inherently potentially multiple. Each perspective from which an entity can be acted with or can draw another into action from is a potential ‘self’ of the entity. Therefore, entities “co-arise as the corresponding perspectival correlates of action, of the concrete givenness of objects” (p. 206), and “intersubjectivity is already embedded in the concrete things themselves in the world by the way they are concretely and perspectivally given” (p. 206). In other words, time, space, and interaction/interrelation are immanent to the entities co-arising in a milieu. They cannot exist outside of being in relation to other entities in a specific time and place, and they must have the potential to be multiple. Therefore, each transition from lunch to nap must be a specific, co-arising, multiple transition.

Implications for Conceptualizing “Self”

These assumptions of co-arising, specificity, and multiplicity underpin Kimura’s (2005) philosophy. He discusses, for example, multiple selves (rather than the notion of *a* self) that co-arise in relation to others in context. None of these multiple selves (e.g., a more private self at home, a more public self when talking to one’s boss) is a more or less “authentic” self because the very notion of self is not absolute but emergent. This is important in challenging the notions, for example, that children are first a self (individual) and secondly a member of a group in the classroom or that a child in the classroom is somehow less self-like when in this public context than the implied (authentic) individual self. Kimura uses the notion *aida* (betweenness) to draw attention to this relationality and co-emergence, which I explore further below and draw from in the first hybrid notion (*aida*-assemblage) I propose.

Implications for Research in Context

These ontological assumptions, also alter the way a complex site such as a Hoikuen might be perceived. A significant implication is that this ontological assumption is that there is no absolute self (or other). Self and the world/milieu co-arise. Therefore, there is no essential (or non-transient, non-relational) nature of any*thing* (including, of course, entities typically categorized as social or material entities). Entities that would at first seem to be stable or essential rather than emergent such as “culture,” “tradition,” or even “curriculum” are important to address here.

This argument of co-arising or emergence inherently includes past collective experiences—the historical. As Arisaka (2001) argued, co-arising is a temporal (including historical) and spatial emergence. This notion that heavily influences Kimura’s (e.g., 2005) philosophy has implications for researching in context. The perspective I take here rejects a notion of culture (or society, or other terms for collectives and traditions) as static, stable, and deterministic. Instead, we might conceptualize culture and cultural notions in an emergent sense as entities that evoke a feeling of resonance with the past and with others engaging in the practice—a relationality (aida) that resonates in time and spaces. This concept of culture is not something that is a determining or static force, nor is it necessarily random in its emergence. This concept of culture might be thought of “as ‘traces of prior meaning making processes’ that ‘afford and constrain what will happen in new social situations’” (Anderson-Levitt as cited in Hayashi & Tobin, 2015, p. 3), or as Latour (2005) puts it “simultaneously that which makes people act, a complete abstraction created by the ethnographer’s gaze, and what is generated on the spot by the constant inventiveness of members’ interactions” (p. 168). This sense captures the spirit of emergence—new meanings and uses that co-arise with the historical tradition in each new enactment or performance—while also recognizing that culture is also inevitably a product of our studies.

Underlying Ontological Assumptions for Jane Bennett's Theory of Causality

In addition to Kimura Bin's theory of *aida*, I also draw from the vital materiality proposed by Jane Bennett (2010; 2020). In proposing hybrid concepts to guide a research methodology (*aida*-assemblage and *bamen*-as-middle-voiced language) I put ideas from these scholars in conversation. What drew me to Jane Bennett's work out of the many theoreticians considering nonhuman materiality is her "shift away . . . from a focus on an elusive recalcitrance hovering between immanence and transcendence (the absolute) to an active, earthly, not-quite-human capaciousness (vibrant matter)" (2010, p. 3). Though philosophical at times, Bennett's approach is practical and grounded in observations of our contemporary world. Bennett presents a case for considering non-human agency (vital materiality) and a non-linear notion of causality. Three Spinozian notions underpin her discussion: affect, conatus, and mode.

Bennett argues (2010) (via Spinoza) that all entities have the potential for affect, which she defines as "the capacity of any body for activity and responsiveness" (p. xii), and for her, this affect *is* materiality. It is not something external to entities to be endowed upon them. She writes, "impersonal affect or material vibrancy is not a spiritual supplement or 'life force' added to the matter said to house it . . . I equate affect with materiality, rather than posit a separate force that can enter and animate a physical body" (p. xiii). This conception of materiality aims to present a vitalism that is "intrinsic to materiality as such, and to detach materiality from the figure of passive, mechanistic, or divinely infused substance" (p. xiii). Entities *do* things. They *affect*.

For Bennett, *conatus* is a "thing-power" that is embodied by every entity "expressed as a stubbornness or inertial tendency to persist" (p. 22). *Conatus*, a term borrowed from Spinoza, permeates both simple and complex alliances of bodies. These bodies, which are neither subjects nor objects themselves, can be thought of as modes. When probed, modes reveal themselves to be alliances of other bodies. To be in an alliance, mode, or the term Bennett settles on—*assemblage*—of bodies means “to mod(e)ify and be modified by others” where “the process of modification is not under the control of any one mode—no mode is an agent in the hierarchical sense” (p. 22). Here she follows a similar logic to Bruno Latour’s (2005) notion of intentionally flattening the hierarchies of human/nonhuman, micro/macro, near/far, nature/culture. In assemblages, “conatus refers to the effort required to maintain the specific relationship of ‘movement and rest’ that obtains between its parts” (p. 22). That assemblages exhibit *tendencies to persist* does not, however, imply they are static: “each mode vies with and against the (changing) affections of (a changing set of) other modes, all while being subject to the element of change or contingency intrinsic to any encounter” (p. 22). Bennett employs words such as throb, swarm, and vibrate to describe the energy within and among these modes of vitality. Considering particularity, co-arising, vitality, and assemblage together sets the foundation for a methodology based on a nonlinear, multiple, emergent, and vibrant logic of transition times. I further explore implications for research as I discuss the two hybrid concepts I propose in the next section.

Two Hybrid Concepts to Further Guide Research Methodology

In this section I describe a methodology using two hybrid concepts (*aida*-assemblage and *bamen*-as-middle-voiced language) from my intentional intermingling of Kimura Bin’s discussion of *aida*, an argument from Japanese linguistics and aesthetics, and ideas of vital materialism and middle voice from Jane Bennett. I use these hybrid concepts to explore implications for research methods. Specifically, I focus on implications for analyzing and writing up the ethnographic data (field notes, video data, and video-cued interviews) on transition times that were generated during my fieldwork at this study’s focal *hoikuen* in Japan.

Aida-Assemblage

One of the consequences of translating *aida*/*ma* as betweenness and assemblage is that these terms in English typically imply external connections or links between independent bodies (Nail, 2017). Though *aida* is translated into English as "between," and in its everyday uses can mean a simple spatial relation/location of concrete bodies, the notion *aida* evokes is not limited in the way the preposition "between" is in English to implying a relation based on external connections or objective locations. Indeed, it materializes from the logic of co-arising explained above. Therefore, a hybrid notion of *aida*-assemblage requires a rethinking of relations as neither fully external nor internal, but one with porous borders that allow for "influx and efflux" (Bennett, 2020).

Of course, we perceive ourselves and others as independent bodies. It hurts, for example, when I stub my toe on my desk because I have encountered another entity (in this case violently). Neither Kimura (e.g., 2005) nor Bennett (2010) would deny the reality of such encounters with bodies external to ourselves. Instead, we might consider the example of pain from stubbing one's toe as a violent coming together of two bodies with different goals and trajectories (to walk and to remain in place) in which neither the walker nor desk "causes" the pain in a linear sense, but rather the walker's pain arises from the clashing of competing conatuses. In these encounters, as Bennett (2020) points out, a body "is a porous and susceptible shape that rides and imbibes waves of influx-and-efflux but also contributes an 'influence' of its own" (p. xi). This porous nature (neither fully internal nor external) allows for a conception of causality that is subtle and nonlinear: *influence* and *affect*.

Stubbing one's toe, of course, doesn't happen in a vacuum between two entities: self and desk. It happens in a larger context of space, time, and relations such as at home by oneself, while one is teaching, in a bustling coffee shop. The pain becomes its own moment potentially creating a ripple of effect: embarrassment, concern, cover-up, cursing. In other words, this moment might be taken up in a larger sociomaterial assemblage taking on its own meanings and effects through what Latour (2005) calls translation: a coming together in which no entity is the same (or produce the same effects) as they would be outside of that particular sociomaterial assemblage.

Kimura (1972), citing the work of philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō, argues that all interactions (within oneself or between oneself and other entities) happen in *kūki* (an air, an atmosphere) and *basho* (place and space). In his discussion distinguishing events (particular, emergent) and things (objects), Kimura (1982/2011) points out that events are “constantly in a state of instability” and are not mutually exclusive in time but exist in a state of being mutually between (*aida*). Things, in contrast, are stabilized objects in which the betweenness is lost. We cannot help but to stabilize (simplify, objectify) events by directing our consciousness toward them. In research, then, it is inevitable that by attending to and attempting to describe the world of unstable, webby events that we simplify, stabilize, and objectify our observations. These descriptions tend to sound like lists of external relations among independent objects as we attempt to translate them into language akin to translating between languages when “in trying to forcibly speak what had never been uttered by the words of a particular language, one cannot help but exercise a certain violence upon those words” (Kimura, 1982/2011, p. 967). But, by being aware of such, we might purposefully seek to keep an openness toward *aida*—the betweenness that is multiple, unstable, and permeable—while recognizing the impossibility of fully doing so.

The betweenness then of the *aida* in *katsudo to katsudo no aida* (between one activity and the next) might be viewed as not simply a time of transition, but a multiple, relational interaction of actors and assemblages in a particular atmosphere and place in the everyday of the daycare routine. In other words, where the English word transition implies movement, one facet that is particularly unique to this concept of *aida*-assemblage, is more of a sense of becoming among porous entities in a unique time-space that is *between* other activities in which notions such as causality require attention to the multiple, unstable nature of *influence* and *affect*.

In the context of transition times in *hoikuen*, then, one might see how, if I am to avoid the problem of listing things and their external connections, a sensitivity or openness to exploring transition practices as *aida*-assemblage (a nonlinear, temporospatial relationality or betweenness of vibrant, porous human and nonhuman entities) would require a sensitivity to more than the activities of teachers and children or a description of the space.

Here I revisit my opening vignette as it was written above, and which I wrote without careful consideration of *aida*-assemblage. After presenting the vignette again in its original form, I then briefly discuss what I might do instead drawing on the notion of *aida*-assemblage.

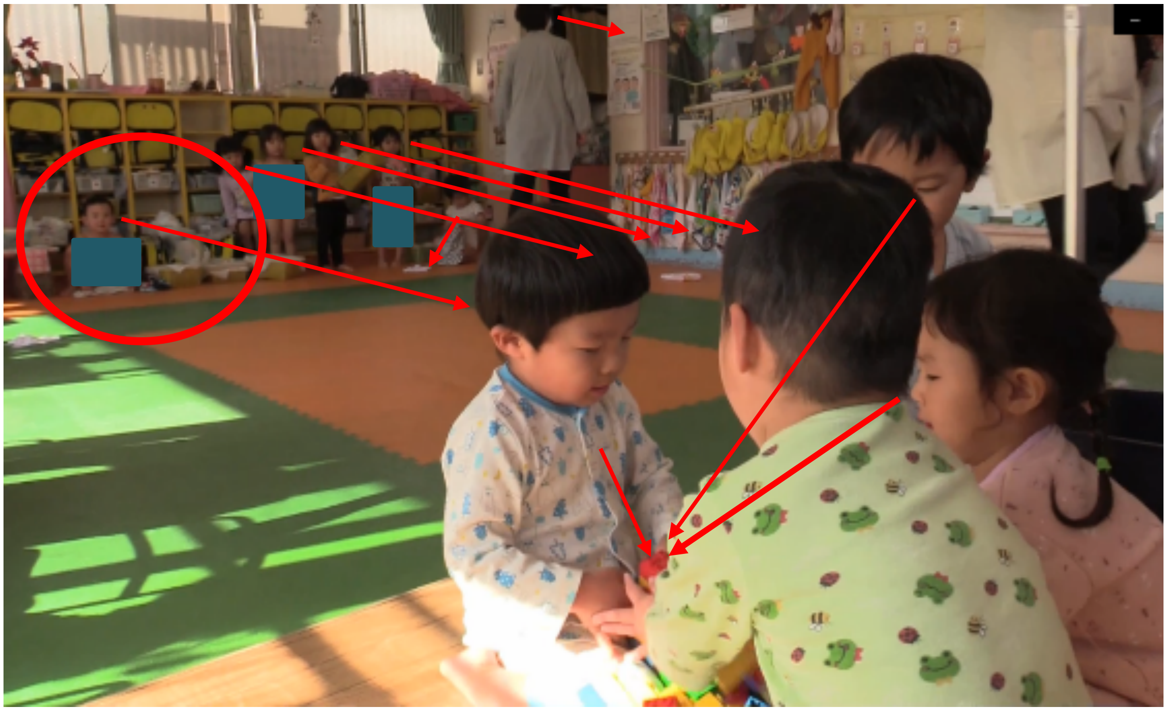
Jun, one of the more active boys in the class, is one of the first to start changing. However, he is also the last to complete the transition from lunch to nap. He observes the bustle in the classroom as he undresses and gets his pajamas on at a glacial pace alternating sitting, standing, and squatting near his cubby. This was not unusual for Jun. Indeed, Jun often goes about tasks in his own way and at his own pace throughout the day and not just during transition times.

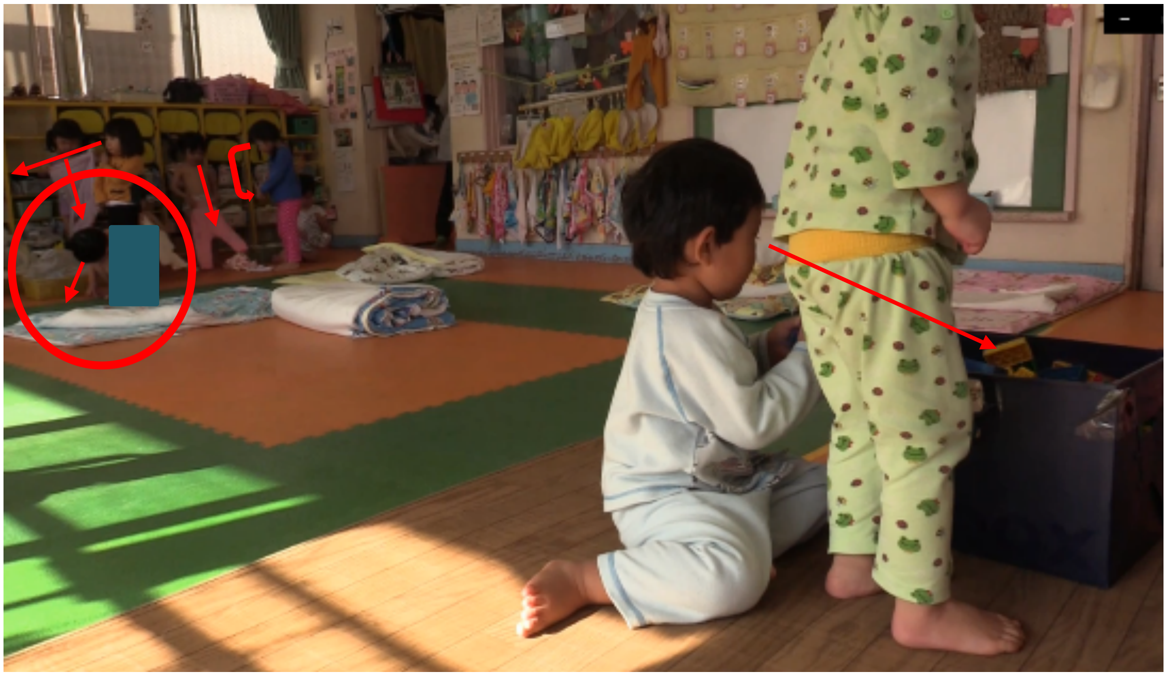
The lead teacher starts the transition time helping children change and then lays out the mats and blankets. The other two assistant teachers alternate assisting children in the bathroom, *cleaning, and encouraging children who had been playing with Legos to clean up. Each time one of the teachers walks by Jun, they comment cheerfully. "Keep it up." "You were the first to start, but I wonder if you'll be the last to finish?" "You're almost done folding your shirt. Good job. Don't forget to fold your pants." In the end, the lead teacher sits next to Jun saying "It's nap time now. Let's finish changing and putting away our clothes." At which point he quickly finishes folding his play clothes and puts on his pajamas.*

While this part of the vignette helps paint the scene of this particular transition time, it reads a bit like a set of procedures in time rather than a description of relations within a time and space. To better highlight *aida*-assemblage within this time and space, I suggest a move away from this style of vignette. I might add still shots from the video that show rather than narrate gaze, posture, and orientation toward others and other things (see an example in Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1

Children's Gaze and Posture Changes

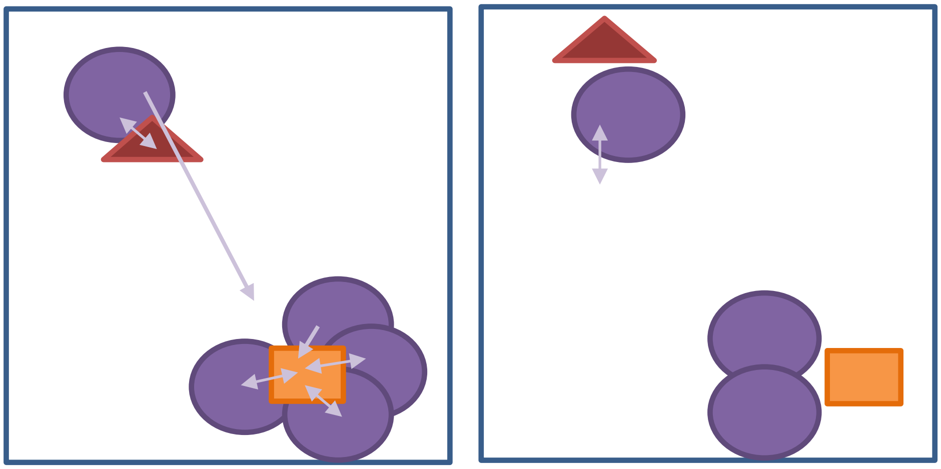




I might also represent the scene in abstract graphics that show proximity and flows of movement of people and things without prioritizing some entities over others (see an example in Figure 3.2). I take my inspiration for this particular technique from Jung's (2018) dissertation work exploring dialogic child-robot assemblages. This abstraction forces material objects and the humans in the space into the same plane and scale, which assists in disrupting the tendency to focus on human subjects in interactions. Though posture and gaze are lost in this style of representation, it allows for the reader's gaze to be more intentionally focused on the webs of interaction (*aida*-assemblage) than on who is acting. In the images below, I use circles to represent the children, a triangle for clothes, and a square for toys. I use bidirectional arrows to show touch-based interactions and unidirectional arrows to represent attention though gaze and body orientation.

Figure 3.2

Jun, Clothes, Children Playing with Legos, and Floor



These two techniques presented together allow the reader to join in observing the scene without the need for as much language moderation. In other words, we see Jun's shifting posture and gaze in relation to the shifting milieu rather than reading about the typicality of these actions as I had implied in my written vignette. In different ways both techniques also foreground relations among the actors in the space and time, which was also something not fully attended to in my opening vignette. What neither of these techniques captures, however, are the linguistic facets of the interactions, which are also integral to the transition. Furthermore, neither include entities not physically present in the images that may be influencing the transition (e.g., the daycare schedule, policies about the required length of nap time, screens typically used to divide the room that were not brought out on this particular day). These additions require other methods to address.

Bamen-as-Middle-Voiced Language

I explore below what I might do to keep an openness to *aida*-assemblage while including linguistic interactions and a sensitivity to actants outside those visible in the scene. When attempting to add back in written descriptions, I struggled with the linguistic challenges of writing about relationality and non-linear causality in English because our grammar implicitly favors notions of linear causality ("to do" as an active structure or "to be done (by)" as a passive structure). Augustin Berque (2017) points out that the Japanese language is particularly suited to a type of conceptualization of relation as temporal and spatial, reflecting a linguistic logic that favors the atmosphere or what he calls the ambient, and I found it helpful to start with thinking about this logic.

Berque (2017) evokes the word *bamen* in his argument about the logic of the ambient; "the word itself structurally means 'facing (*men* 面) the place (*ba* 場)'" (p. 16). He explains *bamen* as an alternate logic to the English subject-predicate structure. Instead, in Japanese often there is an implied interpreter (rather than a subject) of the scene (predicate). The interpreter is the one "facing the place" such that their "existence is implied by the things themselves" (p. 17) in the ambiance. He writes that "subjecthood here is not concentrated into an 'I,' it is diffused into the whole *bamen*" in the sense that the subjecthood implied in *bamen* is "a purely immanent *sum id, ubi sum*: 'I am that, where I am'" (p. 17) rather than the Western transcendental subject who could state "I think, therefore I am" in a Cartesian sense or as "an 'I' who could say *sum qui sum*, literally 'I am who I am,' as our Vulgate makes Yahweh say on Mount Horeb (Ex. 3:14)" (p. 17). Or, more simply put, the subject is "*an ambient*, being there in the things around and the atmosphere thereby" (p. 18).

Berque (2017) explains that this is what makes possible in *haiku* poetry (see below) for there to be no subject at all and yet for the *haiku* to evoke the milieu in which perhaps both author and reader/listener assume the role of implied presence and interpreter of the time/place/atmosphere. In other words, intersubjectivity in the *haiku* (but also in everyday interactions) might be conceptualized as facing the ambient—being together in a shared experience of time and place (either literally or figuratively, though poetry, for example). *Aida*-assembling.

The classic haiku of the 17th century poet Bashō is one of the most well-known. Kimura (1982/2011) points out that when translated out of Japanese the danger is that haiku become “a bland report about the world of things” (p. 986) whereas when reading in Japanese, it describes “an event occurring in between the sound and Bashō” (p. 986):

Old pond!
Frog jumps in,
Water’s sound.

One of the ways this “list of things” problem can be avoided in English is to adapt *haiku* to the grammar of the language, such as adding a subject where an interpreter of the scene is implied in Japanese. This can be seen in the translation of poet Ōshi’s (1977) haiku cited by Berque (2017):

風鈴の	F*ū*rin no oto	The windbell’s
ちいさき音の	chiisaki oto no	tiny chime
下にゐる	shita ni iru	I am under

In Japanese, the “I” is unstated, but there is an implied interpreter of the scene. In the English translation, the subject “I” is added in. If we attempted a translation without adding the subject “I” runs into another problem. English verbs reflect the subject in their conjugation, so “to be” must be “am,” “is,” or “are.” To get around this we would have to use the root form “be,” which might be mistaken as a command; change the verb to something like “exist” or “stay,” which change the meaning slightly; or changing the verb tense to “being” or “existing,” which of course also changes the meaning slightly. It is easy to see why translators would add a subject. However, without a subject the poem might read something like this:

The windbell's
tiny chime
being under

This poem evokes a scene of summer. In Japan the sound of the windchime is said to have a cooling effect (as it implies a breeze). The author (grammatically represented as "I" in English) faces (or lives) the scene in its temporo-spatial milieu (summer, humidity, sound of the windchime and the breeze it implies, rhythm of the poem). The acts of living, writing, and reading the poem bring one into an *aida*-assemblage as interpreter (rather than subject) of the scene…just not quite as well as if no subject were needed to present the scene in English.

Like the problem of translating the *haiku*, the question is how we might better approximate the logic of *bamen* in English given the limitations of our subject-predicate structure. As a step in this direction Bennett (2020), drawing on the poetry of Walt Whitman, points to middle voice, that is to grammar that "designates performances undertaken *within* a field of activities, rather than either to do something (the active voice) or to be acted upon (the passive voice)" (p. 112). Citing the historical linguistic work of Émile Benveniste, middle voice can be traced to language that suggests entities are "*inside*, and thus also altered by, the process" or, in other words are "*effectively amidst*" (p. 112, emphasis in original) rather than outside the process. She cites verbs such as "to promulge" and "to animate to" and phrases such as "It sails me" from Whitman's poetry as examples of verbs that "name not-quite-intentional but still directional efforts" that have "quiet efficacy of influence . . . a below-the-radar, 'ethereal' mode of causality, which proceeds not in a straight line but in the way that moonlight pervades a scene" (p. 114).

However, the challenge of writing with middle voice in English is daunting. Not all verbs agree well with this construction, and the result can draw too much attention to itself, sounding like an overly romanticized narrative of the scene. For example, in attempting to use middle voice to add the screens that were not mobilized to divide the room that day, I ended up with a description like this:

> *Screens held in place. All parts of the room opened for view. Legos engaged. Children's hands and gaze interacted.*

This approach, while theoretically interesting, when used alone is not an adequate answer to the challenge of representing this scene in narrative form. Instead, I found more hope using these written descriptions in combination with other representations of the scene (including the still images and abstracted images I discussed above). In another way of representation, I added nonhuman entities into a transcript of the scene, as in the following excerpt from just before and during the still shot of the first picture in Figure1 (for transcription conventions see Table 3.1).

Teacher 1: ((Vacuums near cubbies))

Vacuum: ((Humming loudly with rising and falling in pitch as it moves across the section of floor))

Jun: ((Looks toward the vacuum and then toward Teacher 2))

Teacher 2: ((Hands Jun his shirt, bottom open))

Teacher 2: Mou taihen. Okatazuke no jikan da yo. ((Turning toward the group playing with Legos®))
"Uh-oh. It's time to clean up."

Screens: ((Not dividing the room as usual))

Child 1: Okatazuke [yatte. ((Holding a Lego in her hand next to a Lego structure, looking at Child 2))
“(She) said it’s clean up time.”

Lego: ((Remains in Child 1’s hand after she says “it’s clean up time”))

Jun: [((shirt continues being held at floor level. Gaze shifts toward children and Legos))

Child 2: ((Shakes his head “no” and places another Lego on the structure.))

Child 1: ((Leans into the Lego structure and places her piece on it))

Lego structure: ((Keeps children’s attention. Grows.))

Table 3.1

Transcription Conventions

.	indicates falling intonation
[	indicates simultaneous actions/utterances
(( ))	indicates non-verbal
“ ”	indicates translations in English

Though not all strictly “middle voice” in the example above, the actions do not imply linear cause-effect in the same way as if I had simply noted in narrative form that “the *teachers didn’t bring out* the screens *because* they were running late that day” or that the “children continued building the Lego structure after being told to clean up.” In the form of transcribing I employ above, both human and nonhuman actants’ *influence* (compared to, for example, *determine*) in the scene might be included, which is the idea behind middle voice as Bennett (2020) presents it. There are no phrases such as “because,” “so,” or “then” that are often found in narrative descriptions and imply a linear causality. Instead, influence can be left as influence.

When read together with the abstracted images; still shots that show changes in posture, gaze, and proximity; and narrative description that highlights interaction over order and cause of events (using middle voice when possible), the interactions might be read in multiple ways without the need to write a traditional vignette.

Conclusion

The methodology I have discussed above suggests the need to highlight the multiplicity of *affect* and *influence* (the modes of action I propose suit thinking about agency as the betweenness of *aida*-assemblage) and to attempt to move away from a description of lists of things externally linked through the language of causal relations (e.g., subject-predicate sentence structure and phrases like “so,” “therefore,” and “because”). To do this I propose that my representations of transition times in the focal *hoikuen* highlight the ambient (*bamen*) through methods that combine still images, abstracted images, and narrative and transcripts of the interactions in the transition that draw on the idea of middle voice (language/action that is neither active nor passive). In this way I might move toward a research method that foregrounds *aida* (betweenness) in transition times.

In the introduction of this paper, I mentioned the challenge of finding a common or shared notion of transitions with the teachers at the focal *hoikuen*. While we did settle on a shared name for transition times (*katsudo to katsudo no aida*, between one activity and another), the methodological approach I present in this paper does not seek to fix this notion of what transitions are but rather to open it up in a way that honored its multiplicity. This methodology may be of interest to researchers engaged in qualitative inquiry (in education and beyond) who are also seeking an approach to foreground multiplicity and emergence, especially as they analyze and write up their findings.

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CHAPTER 4[14]

AIDA-ASSEMBAGE: A CASE STUDY OF TRANSITION TIMES IN A JAPANESE DAYCARE

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Abstract

As part of a larger study on transition times in early childhood education in Japan, this paper explores two short scenes in a transition from nap time to lunch time in an infant/toddler class at a Japanese *hoikuen* (daycare). Drawing on microanalysis of video data, I present the scenes through narrative that highlights both human and non-human actants and visual representations that foreground *aida* (betweenness, relationality), multiplicity, and complexity to analyze these short scenes. These approaches bring attention to vital materiality, gathering and the qualities of things that gather, and hubs of energy in the classroom in the quotidian practice of transitioning between activities.

Key words: Early childhood education and care, Japan, quotidian studies, aida, in-between, betweenness, vital materiality

Introduction

Times on the timetable (Table 4.1) in early childhood education and care (ECEC) centers mark activities of the day such as circle time, lunch, and nap. Some of the big transitions in the day are also marked on the schedule (e.g., moving from mixed age play during early morning care to age-based classrooms at the official beginning of the day). There are also smaller transition times during the day that are not marked on the schedule (e.g., moving from one space in the room to another for different activities). Some parts of these transitions are routine (set procedural steps) and some are fluid (adapting to the specific events as they unfold). The borders between transitions and activities are often constituted by rituals (e.g., songs, stylized greetings) that serve to set apart these different times of the day. Though on the surface transitions look similar within and across days, they are never quite the same. Indeed, they are never even a fully linear, singular, or defined thing. However, what all transitions (big and small) have in common is that they bridge activities and in that sense are *between* times.

Table 4.1

Daily Schedule for The Infant Class at Kansai Hoikuen

Time	Activity
7:30 a.m.	Hoikuen opens Early hours care: Children of all ages play in the 3- and 4-year-old classroom as they arrive
8:00 a.m.	Infants move to their classroom
9:00 a.m.	Beginning of regular hours Snack; Clean up; Morning circle time (song(s), attendance)
9:30 a.m.	Morning assembly (Mon./Thurs.; exercise, dance, etc.) or Curricular activities
11:00 a.m.	Lunch; Clean up
12:00 p.m.	Nap (change into pajamas, story, music)
2:45 p.m.	Wake up (change, wash hands)

3:00 p.m.	Snack; Clean up
3:30 p.m.	Play time with older classes (Mon/Thurs) or Free play
3:40 p.m.	Closing circle time (song(s), story)
4:00 p.m.	End of the school day Extended hours care: Children play in the 3- and 4-year-old classroom until caregivers pick them up
6:30 p.m.	Hoikuen closes

In ECEC in Japan, much attention is given to the cycles, rituals, and procedures of the day, which includes transition times. At the beginning of the year, which starts in April, classes spend a great deal of time in each step of their routines (washing feet before coming indoors, hanging up hats, washing hands, finding one's towel, putting away outdoor play smocks in cubbies, and so on to transition from outdoor to indoor play) and the rituals (saying *aisatsu*, greetings, to mark the beginning/end of activities) of transitioning. In fact, teachers in the *hoikuen* I visited for this study (Kansai Hoikuen; pseudonym) discussed similar practices to Lois Peak's (1991) description of training children in these routines at the beginning of the year such as though modeling, individual attention to children who need it, and tremendous patience with the learning process. At a monthly meeting, the lead teacher of the two-year-old class at Kansai Hoikuen proudly reported that children were just at the point of mastering the routines of folding their own clothes and putting them away without assistance after six-months of models, cues, and assistance, for example. She praised such quick progress. As Peak (1991) points out, "the amount of time and energy invested in teaching these routines underlines their importance" (p. 129). This paper takes a micro-level analysis of a transition between nap and lunch attending to interactions among teachers, children, and things in the classroom during two short segments of this single transition time. I look at the details and multiplicities of interactions in the context of the classroom.

This paper is part of a larger ethnographic study on transition times in a *hoikuen* (daycare) in Osaka, Japan. In this study I spent six months observing regularly in infant and toddler classes in a *hoikuen* between September 2019 and February 2020 (at which time the COVID-19 pandemic prevented further fieldwork). During this time, I also filmed two full days in each of the classrooms and conducted two video-cued ethnographic interviews (Tobin, 2019) with the *hoikuen* director and lead teachers. In this paper, I employ microanalysis of the video data (Tobin & Hayashi, 2015) taken in November 2019 to explore the complexities of interactions within a single transition time between activities in the infant classroom at Kansai Hoikuen. This classroom is labeled the "zero-year-old class" on official documents. However, most children had reached their first birthday by the time of filming as they must be at least six-months old at the beginning of the year to join the class. Children stay with the same class for the entire year rather than moving to older classrooms when they reach their birthday.

There are many possible ways to approach an analysis of transition times. One way might be a traditional educational analysis using frameworks such as coding schemes that measure quality of interaction between teachers/caregivers and children during transitions—measuring the number of seconds the teacher spends with each child or the posture the teacher assumes when speaking to children, for example (e.g., Burchinal et al., 2008; Cameron et al., 2005; Jamison, et al, 2014). These assessment tools assume that what makes high/low quality interactions can be generalized across contexts including across cultures.

Challenging the taken-for-granted nature of notions of quality as universal that are often present in the traditional ECEC literature in the United States, one might alternately consider an anthropological approach drawing on emic notions of quality or pedagogical values that disrupt the taken-for-granted notions of quality. These studies try not to approach classrooms with such set frameworks and schemes of interpretation as the aforementioned approaches. This allows for critical conversations and reconceptualizations of many notions written about as “common sense” in the traditional ECEC literature (see for example comparatives ethnographies that include ECEC sites in Japan, Burke & Duncan, 2009; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009). In fact, I take an anthropological approach myself in other papers looking at transition times as part of this same project. However, as much as I value the anthropological lens for challenging the idea of quality as universal, even these studies (my own included) do not get around a second problem that would be contrary to my aims in this paper—distilling complex practices into explanations and concepts.

Projects that have taken up the goal (very broadly speaking) of foregrounding complexity, multiplicity, and emergence in interactions in classrooms have largely taken up theory-driven inquiry (e.g., Land & Danis, 2016; Odegard & Rosshalt, 2016; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2013) for writing up findings. These approaches disrupt more traditional quantitative and qualitative interpretive descriptions of classrooms by challenging the very nature of time or who/what is attributed agency. These discussions have certainly influenced my thinking, but they, too, have challenges.

Notably, what seems to be a prevalent trend in these approaches that emphasize complexity and emergence, my own in this paper notwithstanding, is an attention to language and the writing-up of research. To challenge concepts of agency as it is often taken up in interpretive research, for example, these studies rely on neologisms, plays on words, and writing differently (e.g., poetry as research). These approaches move away from traditional ways of representing anecdotes and analyses. However, in doing so they also often move away from thick descriptions of the interactions at hand. As a reader, I find myself intrigued by the theoretical discussions in these papers but simultaneously left wanting more detail and more descriptions of interactions in classrooms. Therefore, in this paper my goal is to describe differently but also to emphasize description over theory.

That being said, although I purposefully try to limit theory in my discussion of the findings, my approach stems from a theoretical framework. This framework warrants a brief introduction. Having lived and worked in Japan for around eight years and having both formally studied and used Japanese language in my daily life during that time, I feel the differences in talking about causality of events in everyday language between the languages I float between. I most often notice these differences when making mistakes. For example, my partner, Katsu, was washing dishes when I heard the sound of crashing dishes. He walked into the living room holding my favorite mug with a big chip missing. I responded in Japanese with the statement, "(You) broke my cup?" (*Kappu wattan*?). He replied, "No, (your cup) broke" (*Iya, waretan*). He was annoyed that my question implied some kind of intentional action by him, and my first reaction was to think sarcastically "the cup didn't spontaneously break." My initial statement was grammatically correct but would be much less likely to be used in this situation by someone who is Japanese. Intellectually I understand and appreciate the logic of using the passive construction in Japanese and yet I struggle to use the intransitive "the cup broke" form in cases where the action does not seem spontaneous or reflexive (the thing doing unto itself). As a language teacher (one of my professional hats), I want to explain this phenomenon as first-language transfer. And it is this, but more than just the language transfer it's an ontological assumption of causality that I subconsciously resist integrating into my worldview. Although I didn't say "you" (subjects are optional and often avoided in conversational Japanese), my verb choice (transitive) implies a subject (you) acted on an object (the cup), and for me that is the instinctive representation of the event when I don't consciously pause to consider my language choice. Without thinking about it, I reach for the "natural" verb to explain the events, which is transitive (subject acting on object). However, upon reflection, I have come to appreciate the description of causality in Katsu's verb choice—the "natural" way of representing the event in Japanese. It highlights the action and effect (breaking, broken cup), but leaves room for a more nuanced version of causality. The fact is my partner indeed did not "break" my cup nor did the cup break itself. The soapy water and hands, the material of the cup, the angle it was held, the way it fell, the distance it fell from, and what/where it hit the pan in the sink broke the cup. This is lost in the sentence "you broke my cup" in which only a subject, "you," is present (even if it is implied rather than explicitly stated) and acting on the cup (object).

In the midst of being interested in this everyday language use and wishing to find a way to avoid being trapped in English's affinity for the subject-verb-object structure, I also started reading Japanese phenomenology. In particular, I found Japanese psychiatrist and phenomenologist Kimura Bin's (2005) notion of *aida* (betweenness, relationality) to be helpful in thinking about writing up research differently. I take up his notion of *aida* in conversation with Jane Bennett's (2020) notions of writing about causality as influence, which I describe briefly below, to move away from descriptions in research of anecdotes that rely so heavily on the preference in English for subject-predicate constructions. Using this framework, I present descriptions of the same scene in three different ways to bring forward different aspects of the scene in its complexity.

Aida (間) is a notion of the in-between. In English the phrase "in-between" often implies external connections between things such as the relative spatial location of an object in-between two others. Japanese has this sense of the meaning, too. However, both philosophically and in its uses in ordinary language, *aida* implies a co-arising between self and the milieu (Kimura, 1982/2011; 2005). Here I will give just one example. In a conversation between two people there can be a sense of discomfort and sudden awareness of one's own speech pace, style, and preferences when interlocuters keep interrupting or having awkward pauses with a conversation partner. In ordinary language in Japanese, one might say this is a moment of "a bad (tempo) in-between" *ma ga warui* (*ma* is another reading of *aida* that tends to imply a temporal facet of betweenness). In more philosophical terms, this interaction among interlocutors and tempos that do not flow makes one suddenly aware of oneself in-between/among the interlocutors and tempo in the moment of awkwardness.

The tempo in the conversation above cannot fully be attributed to oneself or the interlocutor, nor is it only an external link between them in which neither party is changed through the interaction. Self, other, and tempo emerge in the act of conversing. I include tempo here because the tempo (*ma*) itself also acts (e.g., makes the interlocutors feel uncomfortable or suddenly aware of themselves in the conversation, prompts a change in conversation style, invites a third-party listener to interject). Latour (2005) might describe this as an actant—an entity that is the source of some action, where action is not necessarily the same as "determining" but rather might be more subtle such as to "authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on" (p.72). Employing the notion of *aida*/*ma* helps to keep attention on the betweenness or emergence within an interaction among a milieu.

The challenge is how to attend to and describe *aida*/*ma* (betweenness). One way this can be facilitated is by attention to the interactions among milieu over individual actors. In this paper

I approach this task by looking at linguistic exchanges (what referents draw attention in conversation), physical space (where people and things gather), time (who and what spends time associating), and vibrance (Bennett, 2010; qualities of people and things that attract, invite, gather, afford interaction). Writing up these observations poses a challenge. Jane Bennett (2020) proposes that causality in the sense of "influence" (and the other verbs Latour lists) might be better described using the middle voice (constructions that are neither fully active nor passive). The most common use of this voice in English is in reflexive statements like *I sat myself down at the table* in the sense of an action in which the actor is both subject and object of the action. It is also expressed in the phrase *the car drives smoothly on the highway*. The car does not drive itself, but the smoothness is an attribute of the car driving and not the person behind the wheel. The driver is not left out though, as they are needed to sense, observe, and interact with the car driving to experience smoothness. This latter use that blurs the subject and object of *driving* is close to what Bennett (2020) suggests when she writes that middle voice "designates performances undertaken *within* a field of activities, rather than either to do something (the active voice) or to be acted upon (the passive voice)" (p. 112), and in which entities are "*inside*, and thus also altered by, the process" (p. 112, emphasis in original). This sense is somewhat similar to the phrase my partner used "the cup broke" (*wareta*) in the sense that there is an openness to causality that does not require a clear subject. The cup did not break itself/break spontaneously nor did my partner actively break it. Intransitive verbs provide a good starting point for trying think/write in middle voice.

In addition to using middle voice when possible in my narrative description of the scenes, I also foreground *aida* (betweenness) by describing the same 20-30 second segment during the transition in three ways: 1) still shots from the video of the scene, 2) a transcript of the utterances and vocalizations during the transition, and 3) abstracted images of the path and interaction of entities in the classroom. In doing so, I attend to the influence in the classroom of teachers, children, and things: who looks at and/or talks to (or about) what/whom; what entities (people, things, happenings) gather attention; and who/what moves together or stays together; what qualities of things draw attention. The short scenes both come from a single transition between the end of naptime as the last few children wake up to just after the last child goes to the bathroom area to change after nap.

Conventions

I add still shots from the video interspersed with a transcript of the 20-30 second segment of transition. To add a bit of context to the still shots (see Figure 4.1), my camera is positioned near the entrance to the room. On the left side of the shot the children's bags are lined up to go home. The plastic bags sticking out of them are filled with the children's used towels, morning play clothes, pajamas, and bibs from the day. These items are taken home by caregivers each day and replaced with laundered items the next day. The bags hide the children's cubbies behind them. Each child's cubby, chair, towel clip, hat clip, and other items are marked with an animal sticker unique to that child. The nap mats (futon) and blankets are kept in a cupboard except during nap time. They too are taken home to be laundered once a week. Just out of view to the right of the camera is a small kitchen area with an adult-level sink and counter. This is area blocked off from the rest of the room by a solid gate. On the other side of the kitchenette, also out of view, is a bench outside the door to the bathroom area, which is in a small adjacent room. Along the back wall and to the right of the tables visible in the images is a child-height sink. Each child has their own towel hanging next to the sink[15].

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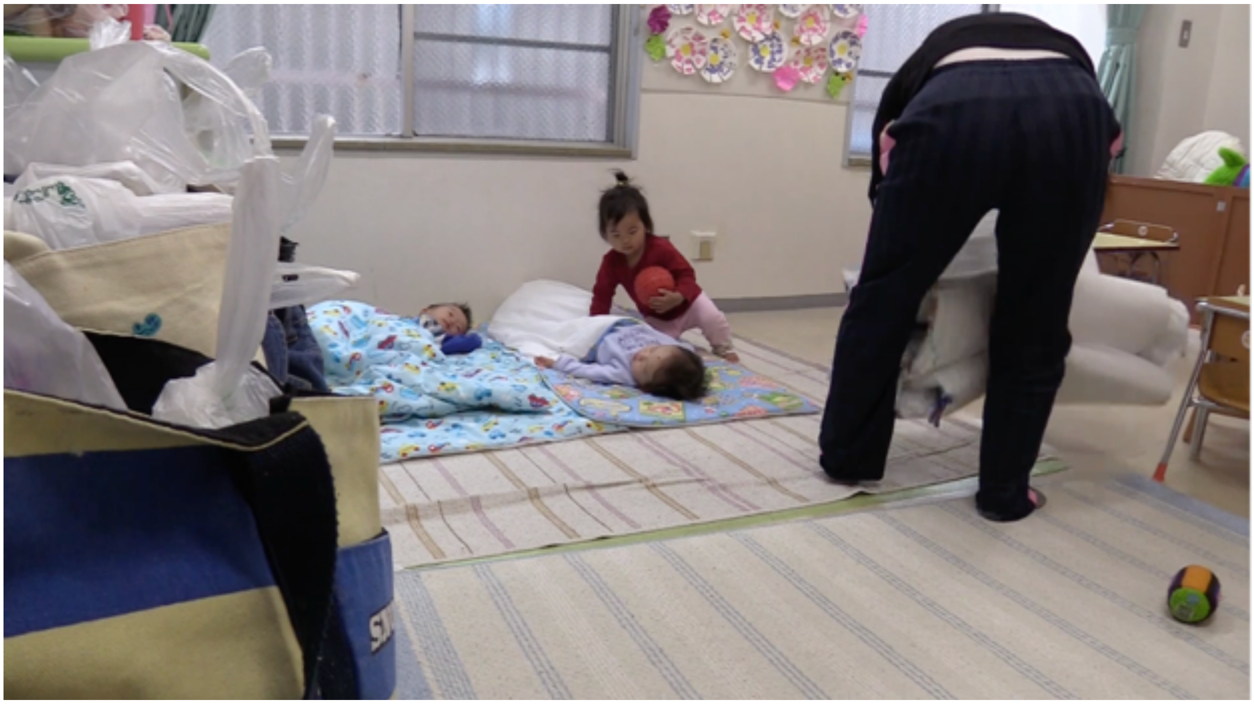
[15] This practice changed after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 4.1

The Last Two Sleeping Children



In transcribing the utterances, I use a modified version of Hepburn Romanization of Japanese, which is followed by a translation in English in brackets. My translations are not word-for-word literal translations. Instead, I translate in a way in which the meaning or function of the utterance in Japanese would be captured in everyday English. I rely on my familiarity with the context and speakers to make judgments as to the pronoun intended or other contextual information when that information is not explicitly stated but is required for the utterance to make sense in English. Non-verbal information is presented parentheses. Colons mark elongated sounds, and words or sounds written in all uppercase letters indicate louder than normal speech. The utterances spoken by teachers and children are all spoken in a friendly tone of voice unless indicated otherwise in the transcript.

Following the still shots and transcript, I present an abstracted image of the classroom during that segment of the transition. All entities (human or otherwise) in relation to others are marked with spheres. I purposefully employ the same shape to emphasize a flattening of the hierarchies (Latour, 2005) between different entities (teacher, child, thing). However, I do employ different colors. This may seem to defeat the point of flattening but using the same color for all entities made the figures too confusing to read (i.e., it made it difficult to pick out different spheres). I use white spheres for non-human objects (e.g., chairs, toys, windows, clothes), red spheres for children, blue spheres for adults, and dark gray spheres for entities whose absence is part of the interaction (e.g., the absence of something that should be in a location or the anticipation of something being in a place). Dashed lines without arrows indicate movement. These are the same color as the entities in movement. Solid arrows indicate a verbal utterance and its intended recipient, and a solid line leading from an utterance (without an arrowhead) indicates an entity referred to in the utterance. Dashed arrows indicate gaze direction. All gaze and utterance arrows are purple. The final symbol I have used is a yellow line. Yellow lines indicate when a policy or law influences the interaction. I place the yellow line between the entities it influences. For all the symbols, transparence indicates a position or movement earlier in the 30-second period, and the solid symbols are the position of entities at the end of the 30-seconds. Entities that don't move significantly are only represented in solid colors. To make it slightly easier to interpret the figures, I have added numbers to the order of positions entities assumed in the classroom with "1" being their location at the start of the transcript.

Transitioning from Nap to Snack

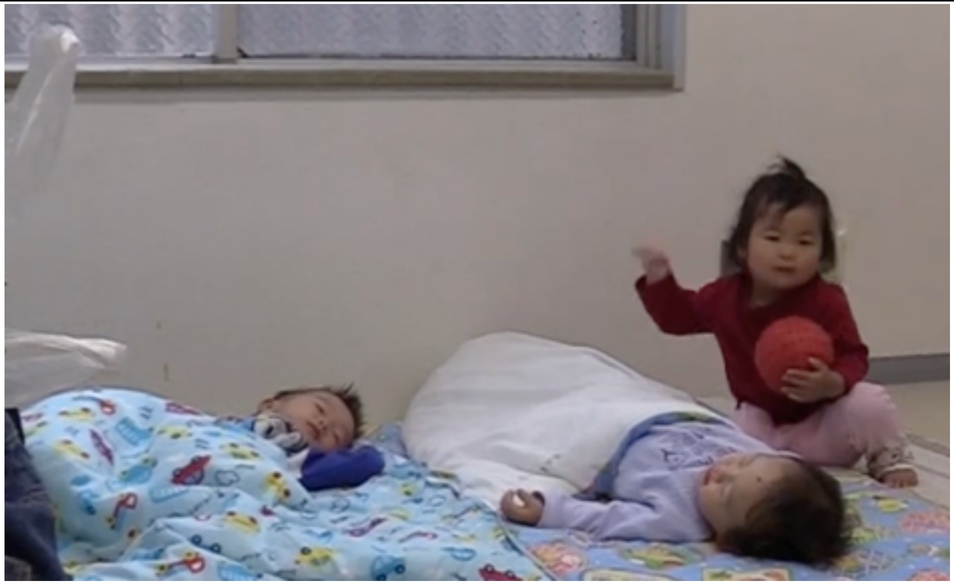
Table 4.2

Images and Transcript: Waking up Yōji and Yūta

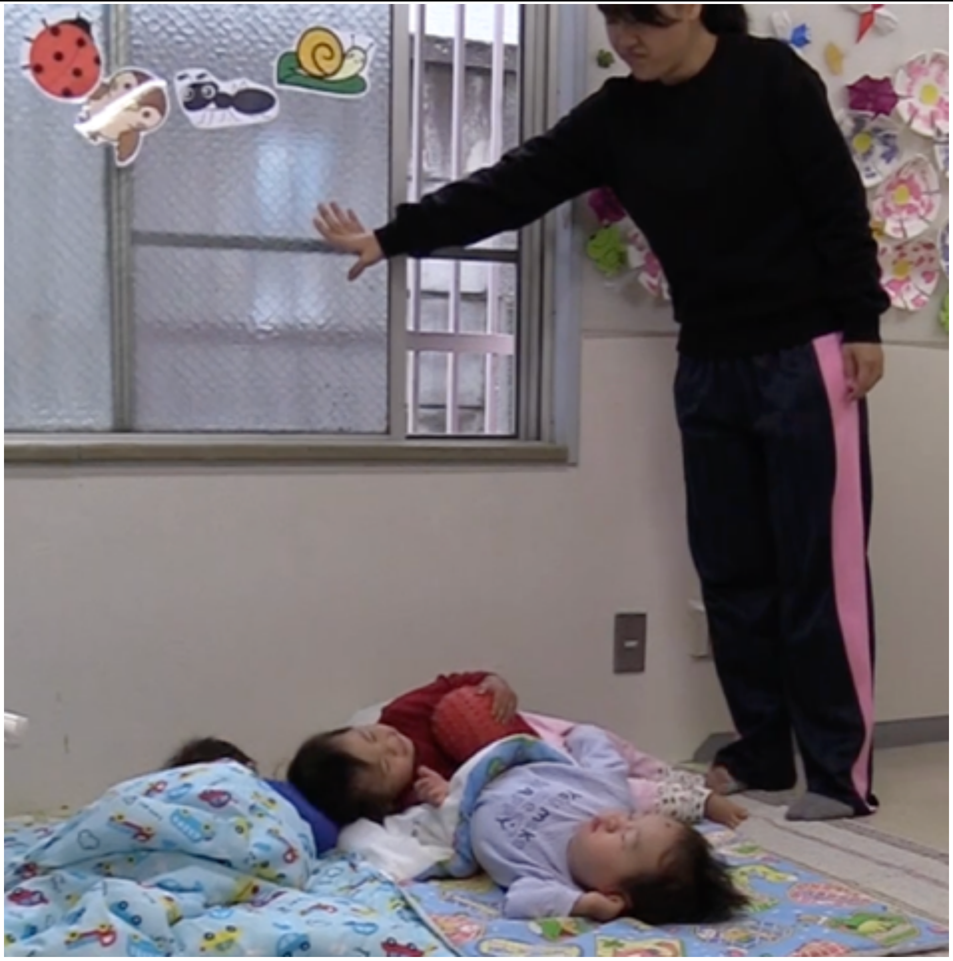
Ball-Yui:	(Ball is held by Yui for almost 5 minutes during the transition)
Tada-sensei:	Ganbarō. [Let's try to wake up.]

Yui:	Ō:I (Approximation of Yōji.)
Tada-sensei:	Yōji. (Chuckles) Yōji yuttan? [Yōji. Did you say “Yōji?]
Other children’s futon:	(Picked up and taken to the closet by Tada-sensei)
Yūta:	(Watches Tada-sensei from his futon.)
Yui:	(Vocalizes)

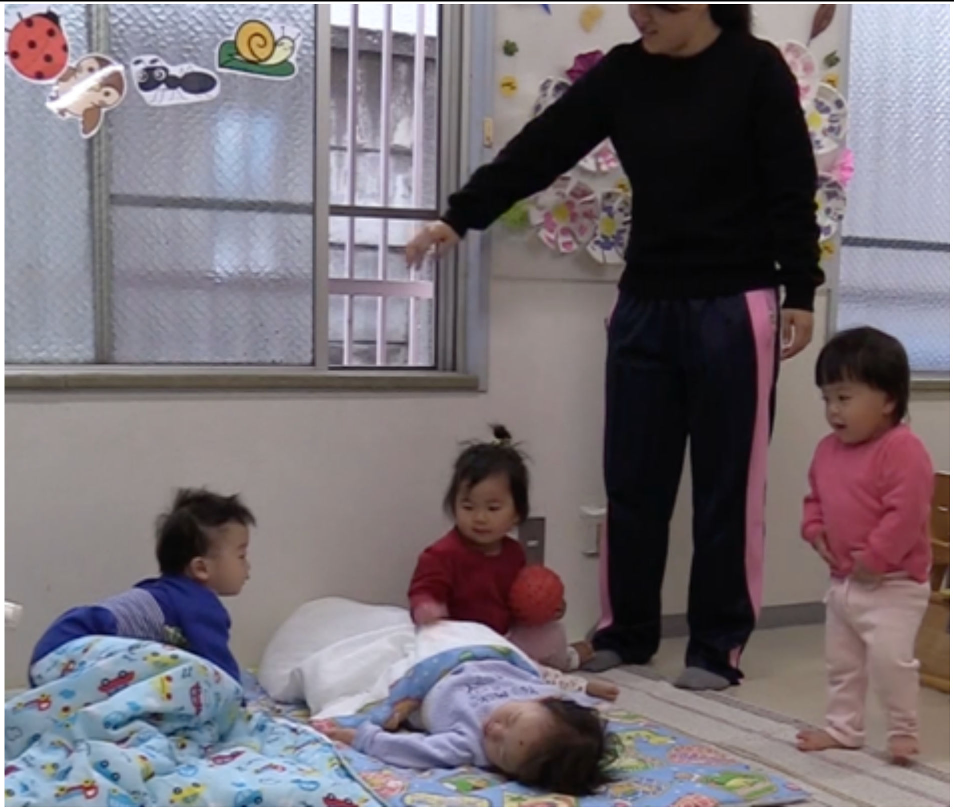
Yui:	(Pats on Yōji's stomach firmly.)
Tada-sensei:	Okite: tte. [She said, “wake up.”]
Yui:	(Pats on Yōji's stomach even more firmly.)
Tada-sensei:	Yasashiku okoshite agete. [Wake him up gently.]
Yui:	(More soft pats on Yōji's stomach.)
Tada-sensei:	Okite wa? [What about saying, “wake up”?]



Yui:	(Leans over, placing whole body on Yōji. Giggles.)
Tada-sensei:	O::ki:te: (Sing-song rhythm) [Wake up.]
Tada-sensei-ECEC policy:	(Opens window near Yōji and Yūta)



Tada-sensei:	Bu bu: (Imitating the noise of a buzzer.) [Don’t do that.]
Yūta :	(Wakes up)
Mia:	(Walks toward the group)
Tada-sensei:	Ohayō Yū-chan. [Good morning, Yū-chan]



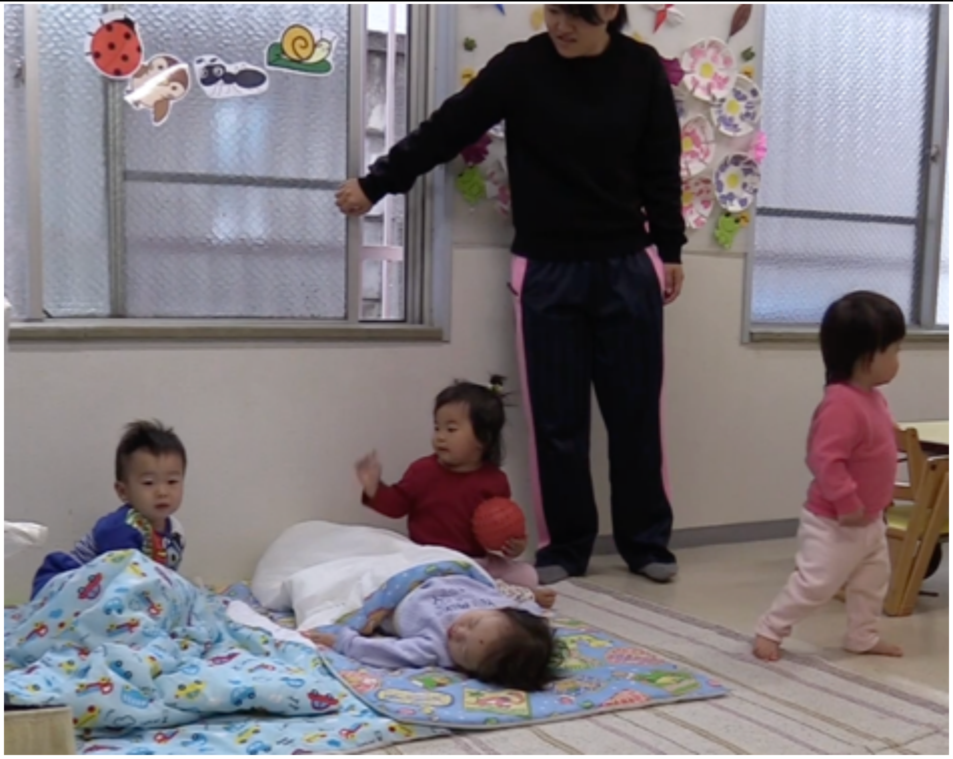
Mia: (Walks away from the group.)

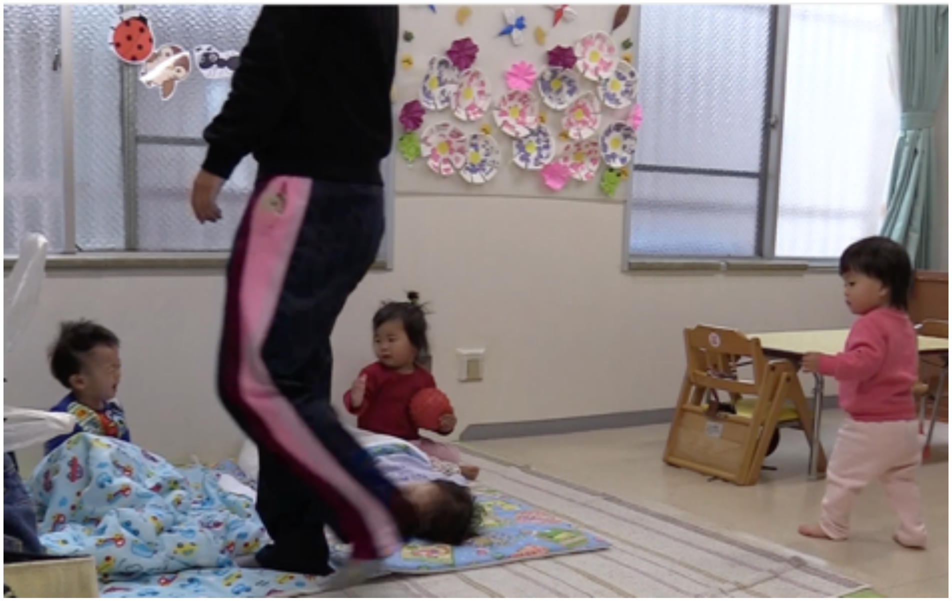
Yūta: (Looks at author.)
(Looks at Tada-sensei.)
(Starts crying.)

Mia: (Walks toward the group)

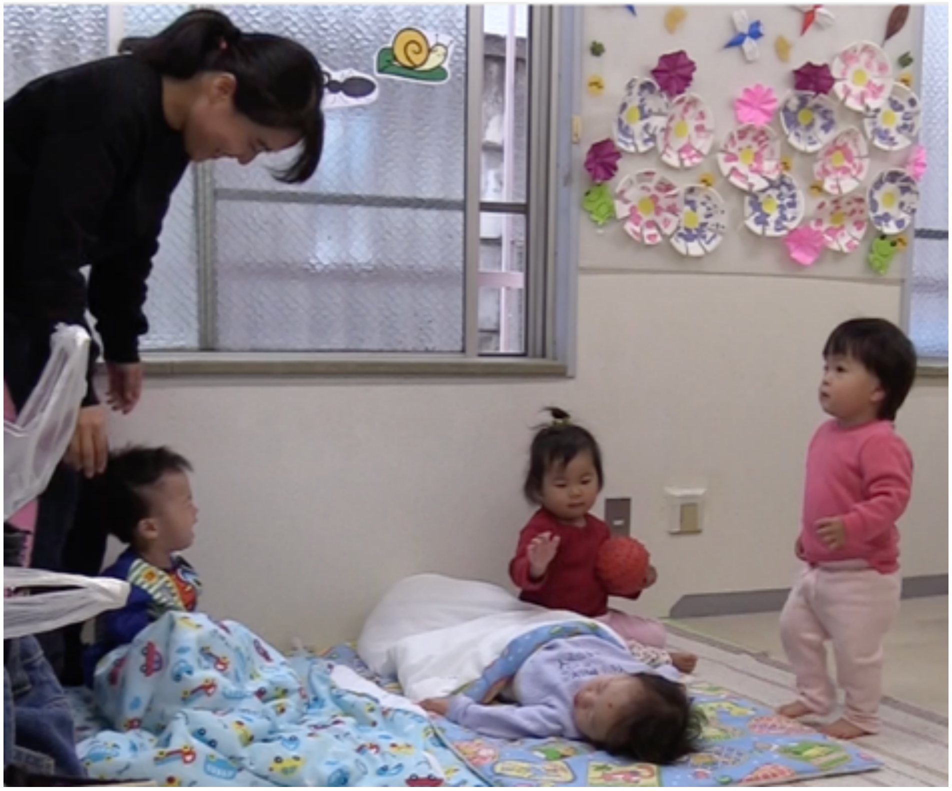
Tada-sensei: (Laughs)
(Walks toward Yūta.)

Yui: (Continues rhythmic pats on Yōji's stomach.)





Tada-sensei:	Ohayō. [Good morning.] (Sits behind Yūta.)



Ball

During the transition, Yui and the red squishy ball engage for almost five minutes. The ball is squishy enough that it is not quite spherical as it is held in the crook of Yui's arm. It takes up more space than her hand, requiring an armful of space or hand pressing the ball to her chest to remain held. As Yui toddles around the room later in the transition, the red ball and Yui occasionally list to one side, tipping over together more than once. In Figure 4.2, Yui (red sphere) and the ball (white sphere) remain in the same position, engaged with each other as Yui is also engaged with sleeping Yōji (red sphere).

Sleeping

Positioned on his back with his stomach exposed (policy requires children sleep on their backs for safety), Yōji the draws the attention of Tada-sensei's encouragement to wake up.

Sleeping Yōji engages Yui's pats and "wake up" calls. Tada-sensei encourages Yui's calls. Yui and ball lean over on Yōji's legs. This engagement receives a correction from Tada-sensei. Yui wanders over from the back of the room to observe the sleeping Yōji-Yui's interaction and wanders away again.

Window

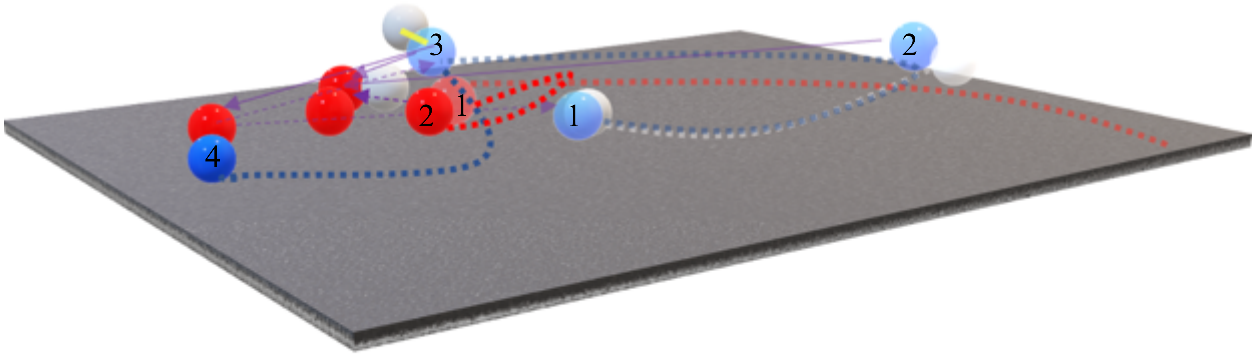
The window is opened. Airing out the room after nap is dictated by policy (yellow line in Figure 4.2 connecting blue sphere 3 and white sphere). Though it is policy, it should be noted that it's a common practice in Japan to air out a room after sleep. It's common sense to the point that in many homes, one of the first things done in the morning is to open all the windows whether in the middle of the sweltering summer or the dead of winter.

Waking up

As Yūta sits up and looks around, he cries. Mia is drawn back to that corner of the room to look. Yūta's crying brings "good mornings" and Tada-sensei's repositioning in the room to sit behind him (blue sphere 4).

Figure 4.2

Movement and Engagement: Waking up Yūta and Yōji



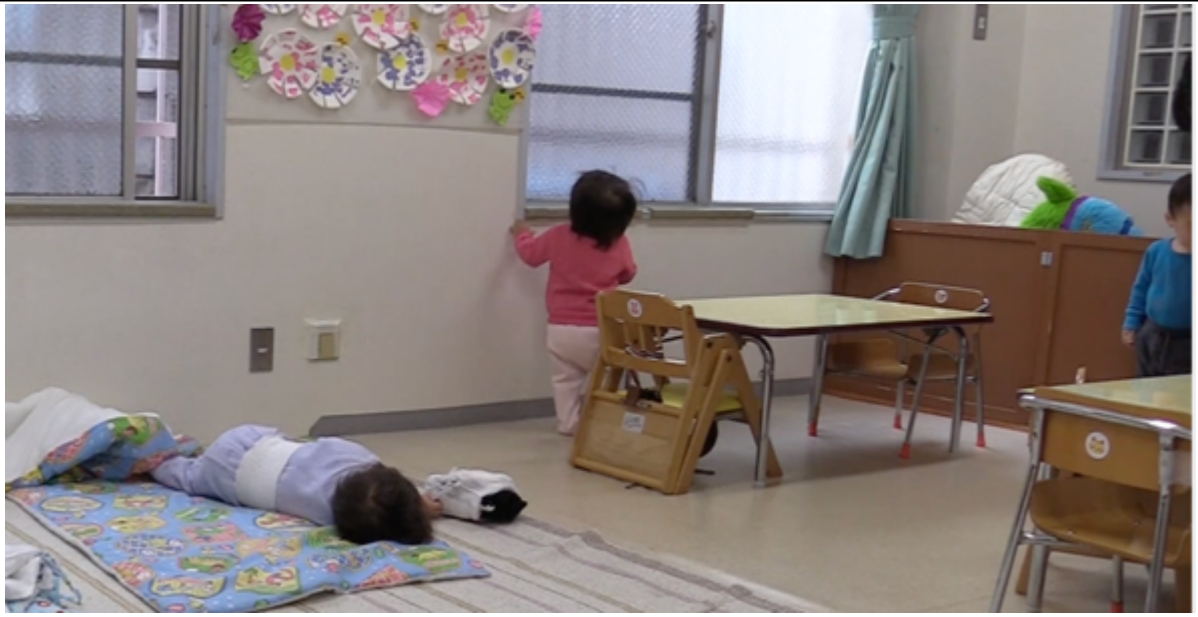
In Figure 4.2 The more transparent symbols are earlier in the interaction and more opaque symbols are toward the end of the section of transcript above (Table 4.2). This abstracted image helps trace the flows of movements and centers of attention. In the image we can see who/what pull others into engagement (red spheres are children, blue spheres are teachers, white spheres are non-human things) whether attracting verbal acknowledgment (solid arrows), visual attention (dashed arrows), movement toward (dashed path lines), or physical touch (overlapping spheres).

Tada-sensei moves from the middle to the back of the room and toward the sleeping children again. She engages with Yui-sleeping Yōji, the futon, the window-policy, and Yūta. The ball-Yui remain in physical contact with each other and frequently with sleeping Yōji. Except for Tada-sensei and the futon mats moving to the back of the room, the movement and attention remains centered near sleeping Yōji and Yūta. Twice Mia walks close to look at the interactions.

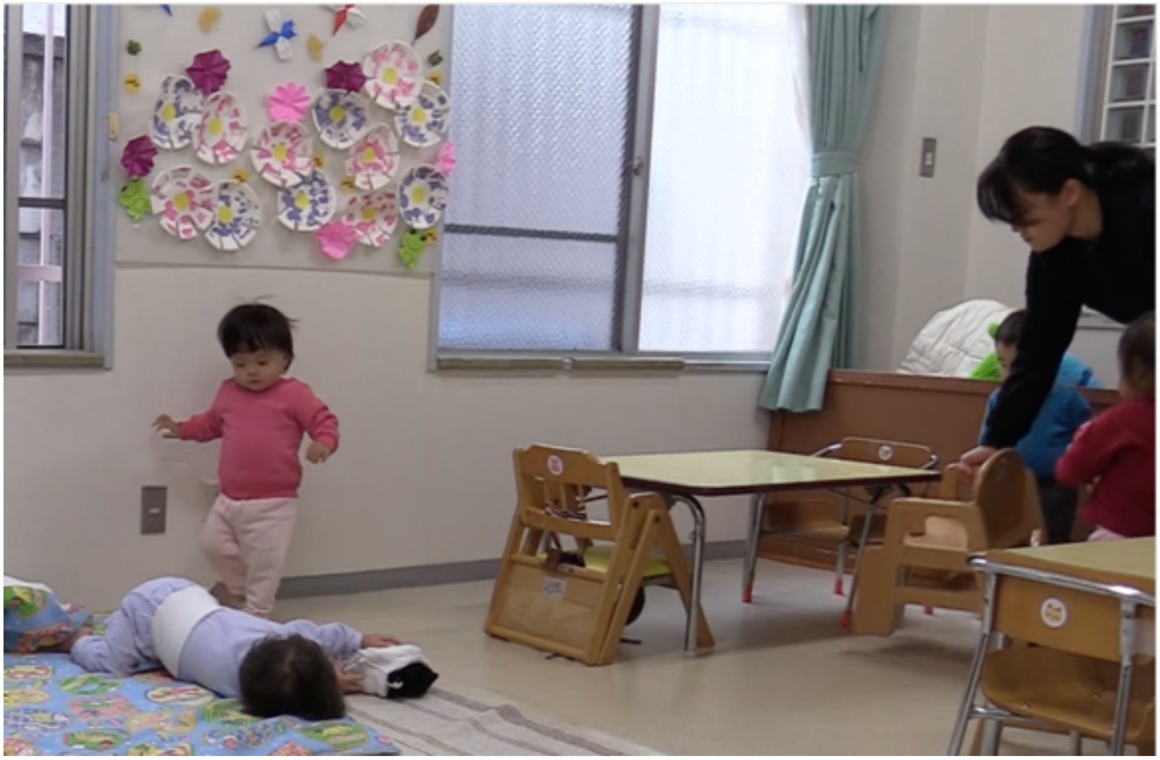
Table 4.3

Images and Transcript: Windows, Sleeping Yōji, and Forgotten Clothes

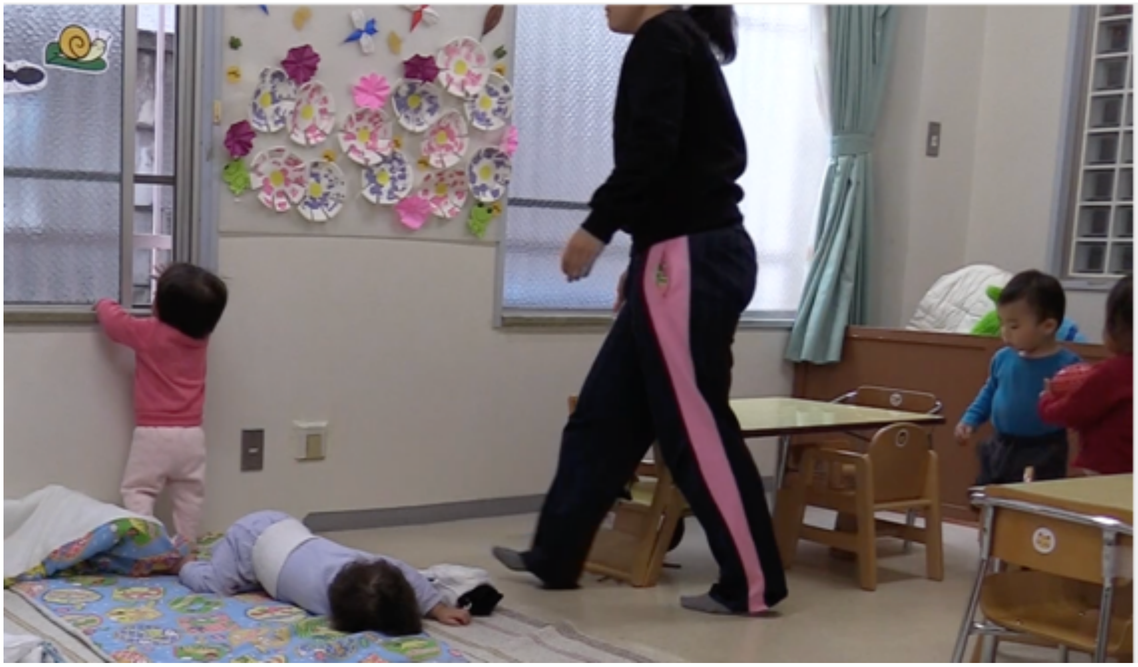
Window-Mia:	(The frosted glass on the closed window doesn’t let Mia see out.)
Tada-sensei:	Sore Yū-chan no isu yakara yada. [Don’t do that because it’s Yu-chan’s chair.]



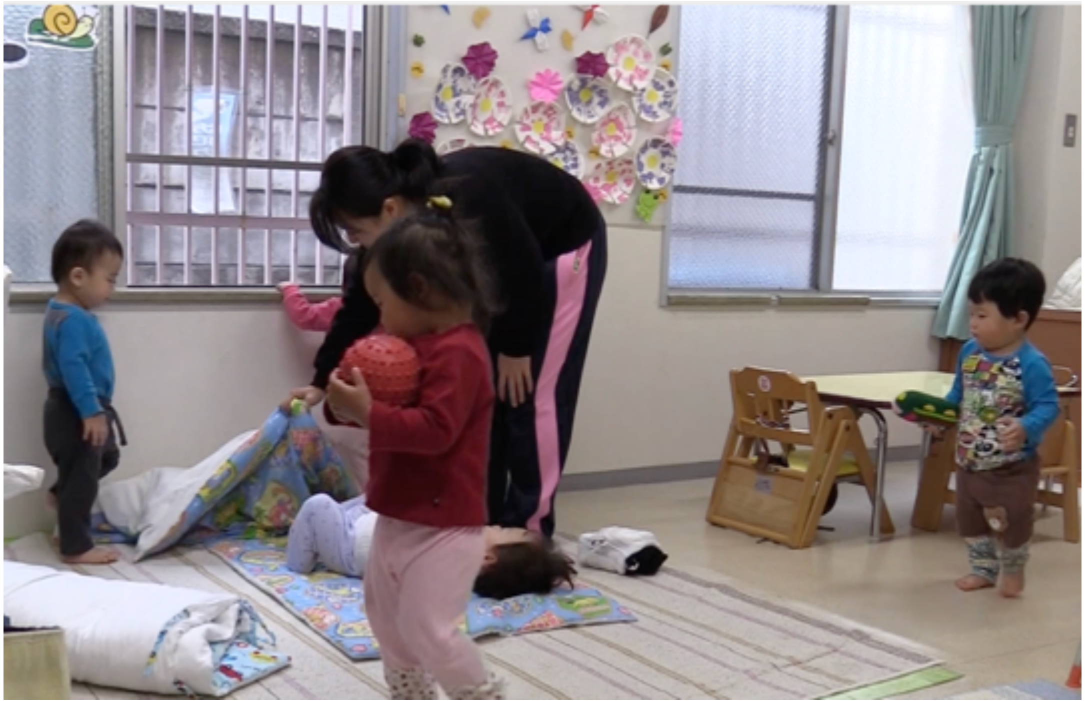
Tada-Sensei:	(Places Yūta's chair at the table.)



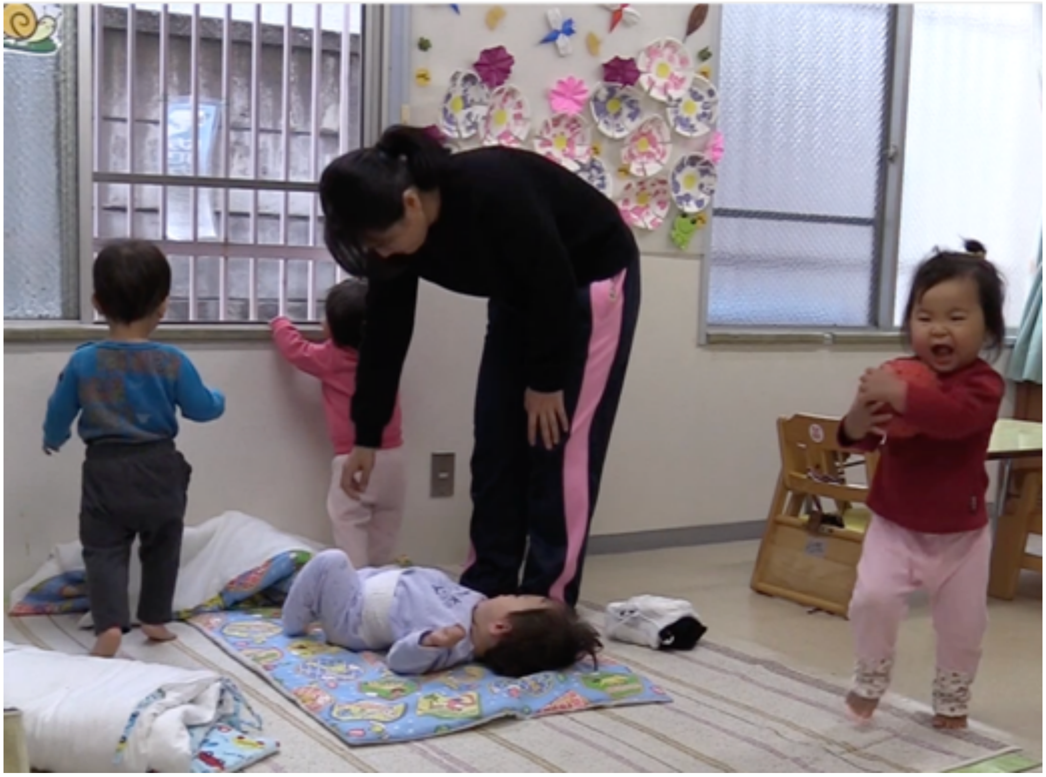
Mia:	(Returns to the open window. Vocalizes. Points out the window.)
Tada-sensei:	Yōji.



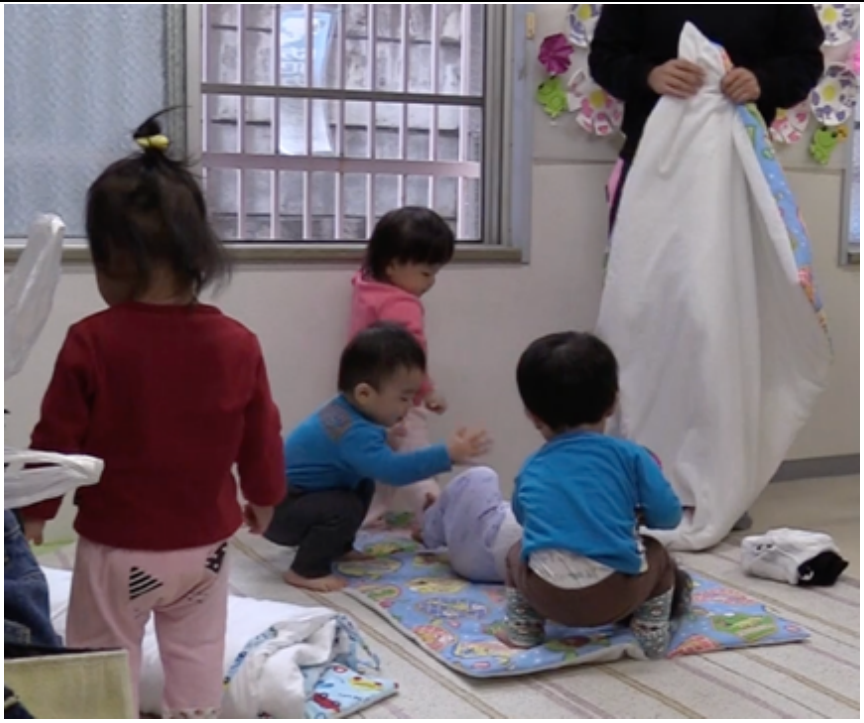
Tada-sensei:	Samui de. Akeru? (Opens window wider.) [It's cold. Do you want it open?]
Tada-sensei:	A sabui. (Suprised tone.) [Oh it's cold.]

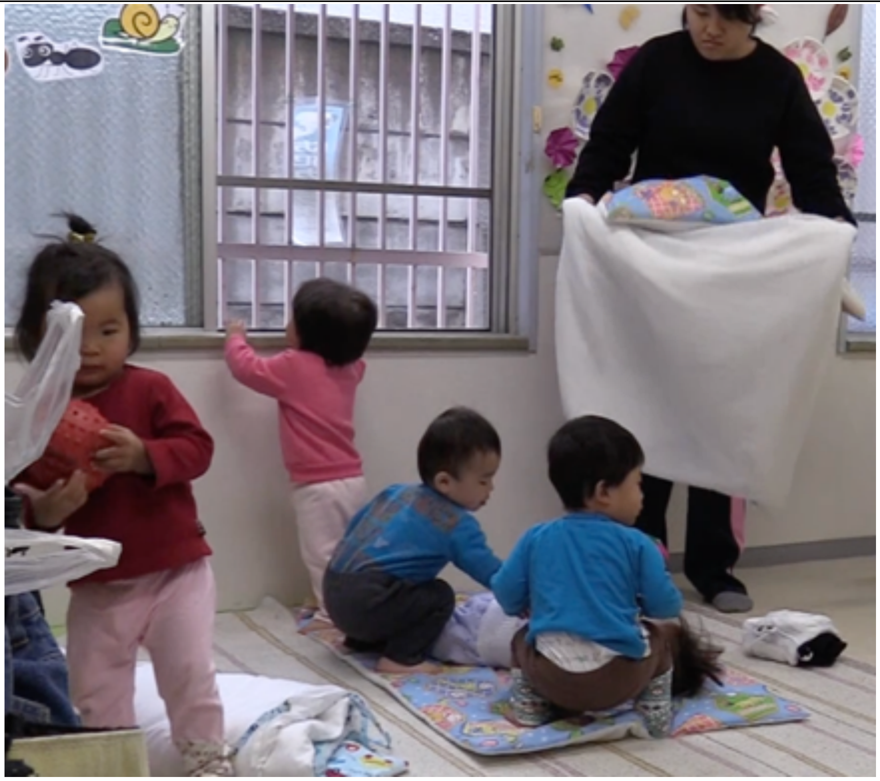


Tada-sensei:	(Lifts the blanket off of Yōji.)
Window-Riku:	(Window is open wide. Riku looks out the open window.)
Tada-sensei:	Ken-chan okigae motte kēhen no? [Ken-chan, you don't bring your change of clothes with you?]



Kenta:	(Squats next to Yōji's head.)
Riku:	(Pats Yōji's legs.)
Abe-sensei	E:? (Surprised tone.) Ken-chan. (From the back of the room) [What? Ken-chan.]





Sleeping

Sleeping Yōji engages Tada-sensei's calling of his name; the removal of his blanket; Mia, Riku, and Kenta's gaze and proximity; and pats from Riku.

Window

The window draws gaze and pointing from Mia. The window is opened further. The widely open window gathers attention from Mia and Riku, who shift attention between the window and sleeping Yōji.

It has stopped raining. The cat that often sleeps on the neighbor's roof opposite the window is not there.

Ball-Yui

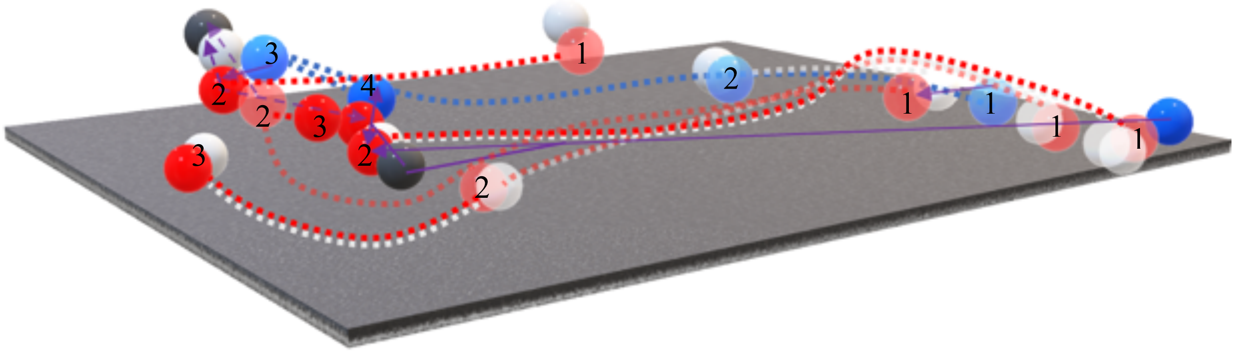
Yui and ball continue to engage as Yui walks around the room. The ball briefly drops and is picked up again by Yui near the cubbies (on the leftmost side of the room in Figure 4.3).

Changes of Clothes

Yōji's change of clothes rolled up in his fresh diaper lie by his head awaiting him. Kenta's pajamas remain at the back of the room rather than returned to his cubby.

Figure 4.3

Movement and Engagement: Windows, Sleeping Yōji, and Forgotten Clothes



Movement in the classroom shifts from the back of the room (transparent spheres labeled 1) to the front gathering around the open window (white sphere) and sleeping Yōji (red sphere). In the front of the room attention oscillates between the window and Yōji (children are red spheres). It has stopped raining and there is the chance the neighbor's cat will be on the roof, which is a frequent occurrence (the anticipation of things or something not there are marked with gray spheres). Yōji remains in place as he starts to open his eyes. Kenta holds a toy but not his pajamas as he joins the goings on in the front of the room. Ball-Yui continue to engage (non-human things are white spheres).

Discussion

Conatus: Gathering Pedagogies, Policies, Presence, and Cultural Practices

The windows (closed, open slightly, open widely) drew frequent attention. When watching the scene together, I mentioned Tada-sensei's attention to Mia's interest in the window. Tada-sensei's response was to say it was policy to have the windows open, but Saitō-sensei, the *hoikuen* director, quickly jumped in to point out that not all teachers would have the presence or awareness to notice a child's interest and to respond by opening the window more when tasked with everything else to do (e.g., wake up Yōji, clean up the futon, help the children put their pajamas away in their cubbies).

If we ask why the window was open, we could answer simply "policy," but that would be missing everything else contributing. Here I am surmising, but it seems likely that the policy to air out the classroom after sleeping is related to customs around airing out spaces and cultural notions of cleanliness and health. But even that is not a full answer. The window could be open just enough to let in air, but it's not. It's open enough to see out, and then it's opened even wider later. A few more minutes into the transition, the second window is also opened widely.

Pedagogical notions about following children’s interests are widely discussed in Japan as they are in the United States. Whether Tada-sensei recognized in the moment or not, her movements embody this value. It was worth the extra steps to the window and putting up with being a little cold to allow an engaged child to explore their environment.

But what about that environment was so engaging to begin with? The *hiyoko gumi* room is located at the back of the *hoikuen* away from the playground and open views. The view out of the windows from *hiyoko gumi* is a gray cement wall and the roof of the neighbor’s house. Unlike the front of the *hoikuen*, there wouldn’t at first seem like much to look at. As different children looked out the windows, teachers commented on the weather (“Oh it’s cold” in the second scene and later in the transition “It stopped raining, didn’t it?” and “(The cat’s) not here, is it?”). Talking about the weather and checking for the cat are part of the class’s daily routine. Almost everyone gathers when the cat is there, vocalizing and pointing. Today it was the anticipation of and absence of the cat and rain that gathered at the window. So, to make another attempt to answer why the window was opened and then opened wider, we have to account for the gathering of policy, cultural beliefs, pedagogical values, routine, weather, absence of the neighborhood cat, the anticipation that something might be going on outside, and human interactions around the window (pointing, vocalizing, talking about what is/isn’t there or going on).

The window pulls, gathers, draws, influences among/between (*aida*). The window is vibrant as it has *conatus*—“form[s] alliances and enter[s] assemblages” (Bennett, 2010, p. 22). Using middle voice, we might say “the window opens widely.”

Qualities

If the closed window were not opaque, if it were transparent, we would not see the same kind of gathering or energy around the openness of the window. The qualities of the things/people that engage matter. It is in the context of these small vibrant details that *aida* emerges. In addition to the opaqueness of the window, we might consider more carefully the qualities of the red ball and of sleeping toddlers.

My first thought about the red ball was to think of it as a (somewhat atypical) transitional object. No dolls or stuffed animals were present in the room. My initial read, while neat, tidy, and fitting with theories of developmental psychology, doesn't account much for the qualities of the ball. Not approaching the ball from this theoretical point of view but from one that considers *aida* allows for different reads, ones that allow the ball itself to influence. The ball, while big, is not a hard texture. It's squishy, and we can see that it's not quite spherical as Yui holds it in her arms and against her chest. Yui not only changes the shape of the ball, but the ball changes the shape of her. The ball is too large for Yui to hold in her hand. She must recruit a whole upper quadrant of her body to hold the red ball. It changes her gait and posture, tilting slightly as she tries to balance toddling around the room with the ball in hand/arm. More than once she tips over while walking or drops the ball. As engaged as she was at the beginning of the transition with waking Yōji, she never let go of the ball even though it meant one side of her body could not be used in the task at hand. What makes the ball so attractive to Yui can only be surmised, but what we can clearly observe is that red ball-Yui (*aida*) are very different than the red ball and Yui outside of their held-holding engagement.

Just like the qualities of the window and the ball had *conatus*, sleeping Yōji was vibrant in a different way than awake Yōji. Cuteness should not be dismissed as trivial here. This is a powerful attribute in attracting attention. At different points in the transition all of the adults in the room commented on the cuteness or sweetness of sleeping Yōji and Yui and Riku's attempts to wake him (myself included). Sleeping Yōji, Yōji-Yui, and Yōji-Riku all pulled attention in their directions.

It was also more than cuteness. The fact that Yōji peacefully asleep as the rest of the class was up and getting ready for snack stood out. One comment to Yōji begat others (e.g., Tada-sensei's comments "Did you say 'Yōji'?" and "She said, 'wake up'."); touching Yōji also gathered attention (e.g., "Don't do that" and "Wake him up gently"). These interactions also brought the attention of onlookers like Mia in the first scene and Kenta in the second.

Hubs of Energy

Things (e.g., open/closed windows, red ball, absence of the neighborhood cat), people (e.g., sleeping Yōji), and interactions among them (e.g., Yui-Yōji) all pulled attention. They functioned like hubs of energy, gathering gaze, movement, proximity, verbal interactions, and touch. Being engaged in *aida* (between/among) is not passive though at first glance something like being held seems like a passive act. Entities in *aida* (between/among) co-emerge and thus change each other like the ball being held by Yui and Yui holding the ball.

Conclusion

In the two scenes above I present less than a minute of interaction and movement in the transition between nap and snack. The whole transition from when the first children woke up to when snack started lasted more than 15 minutes, so this is a reading of less than one fifteenth of everything that went on during the transition time. I could have explored the transition more wholistically; however, to do so would mean a tradeoff with the level of detail in which I describe the scenes.

The question is why we should care about this level of fine-grained description of events like holding a ball, looking out a window, and waking up (in both the senses of waking and awakening). It is precisely because they are so mundane that makes them interesting. This is the stuff of early life in ECEC: watching the goings on in one's environment, exploring the textures of things, following interests, learning boundaries, engaging in (or bucking) routines, being in a group with and synchronizing moods, attention, and states of wakefulness with others.

Methodologically, looking at such small segments of these quotidian practices forces a slowing down. It gives space for details and connections to arise that might not otherwise be visible. There is pause, for example, to consider why a detail like how much a window is open matters. By using techniques like abstraction, flows of movement, hubs of energy, and engagement become more visible. Including non-human things in both a transcript of interactions and narrative description opens space to challenge typical assumptions of action and agency. Using writing techniques that favor *aida*, such as middle voice and careful attention to (not) using linking words that imply linear causality (e.g., because, so, then), foreground relationality in these moments.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In the three articles making up the body of this dissertation, I drew on *aida*/*ma* (betweenness) as both an emic notion and philosophical concept describing temporal, spatial, and interpersonal relationality to explore transition times in early years education at a *hoikuen* in Japan. I used two approaches to describe different facets of the betweenness in transition times.

In Chapter Two I described the ritual of calling children's names and group names. These rituals are marked from other times in the day through their formality and change in *ma* or temporal texture through changes in speech rate and voice pitch. In this paper I employed video-cued ethnographic interviews to learn from teachers in the *hoikuen* about the meanings they make of this ritual. As such, this paper took a traditional interpretive approach.

In Chapter Three I explored an experimental methodology drawing from Kimura Bin's (2005; 1982/2011) philosophical notions of *aida* and Augustin Berque's (2017) discussion of the logic of *bamen* (facing the place) in conversation with Jane Bennet's (2010; 2020) notions of vital materiality, influence, and the logic of middle voice. I proposed that to move away from the subject-predicate structure of English logic that implies linear causality, we could employ methods that highlight webs of influence.

In Chapter Four I applied this methodology to analyzing a single transition in the infant classroom at Kansai Hoikuen. In this paper I described this single transition in three ways foregrounding *aida*-assemblage (webs of betweenness): as a transcript of the interaction that also included the influence of nonhuman actors; a series of still shots from the video that I annotated to highlight posture, orientation, and gaze; and abstracted images of the room across the transition that emphasized changing webs of interactions.

Contributions and Limitations

All three chapters in this project address transitions and are connected through a similar conceptual theme. However, Chapter Two and Four take very different approaches to looking at transitions, the former foregrounding connections of transition to practices with Japanese pedagogical notions and the latter highlighting the particularity and emergence of a single transition. Both approaches have limitations worth addressing briefly. Before doing so, however, I would like to point out an important theoretical contribution these papers share.

As mentioned in Chapter One and further in Chapter Three, much of the current literature on materiality (including temporality and spatiality) are conversations within a "Western" theoretical framework. In this project, I draw on Japanese theories of materiality and relationality. There is a risk in doing so of this study being interpreted as drawing on theory from Japan to explain Japanese things, which implies the particularity of the case of Japan that requires some special non-Western framework to analyze. This is not the argument I intend to make. Instead, by placing these theories in conversation with frameworks from the West for thinking about materiality, such as the work of Jane Bennett (2010; 2020), and by exploring their contributions to qualitative methodology in Chapter Two, I attempt to show how the movements toward Asia as Method (Chen, 2010) and other similar theoretical and methodological approaches might be practically integrated into our inquiry process to extend and challenge current frameworks.

There are two noteworthy limitations of my approaches to exploring temporality and transition times. The first of these is in theorizing transitions from a cultural lens as I did in

Chapter Two. The limitation here is that by attending to identifying patterns, the emergent nature of interactions is obscured. In other words, focusing on patterns can minimize the particularities of interactions. Conversely, careful attention to the particularities of an interaction, as I did in Chapter Four, has the opposite effect. The emphasis on the emergent—how practices come together in the interaction under study—risks that connections to other wider patterns may be lost. The reality is that practices are both made up of patterns and particulars. They are multiple, and different ways of examining them brings into focus different facets of the same practice.

Future Directions

Although in this project, I separate out writing about approaches that focus on the cultural and the emergent into different papers (Chapter Two and Chapter Four), in future projects it may be productive to explore both of these approaches within the same piece. Here I suggest that using multiple approaches in the same writing not to "cover all bases" or appease all critics but to highlight how different approaches to analyzing the same topic further highlight the multiplicity of these complex interactions. This would reject an "either/or" logic of correctness (i.e., transitions are either cultural or particular/emergent practices) and embrace a logic of "both/and" (i.e., transitions are both cultural and particular/emergent practices). Bringing both of these perspectives in the same analysis would foreground how transitions are multiple. Further questions to consider include: What might be made visible by using multiple, contrasting approaches to analyze the same interaction? How might these approaches be integrated in a way that is additive rather than subtractive?

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