ABSTRACT

This study explored the nature of musical interactions among early childhood teachers and infants/toddlers in an early childhood daycare program. Musical interactions in daily activities and the extent to which teachers implement scaffolding in their musical interactions were investigated. Additionally, when music classes were provided, perceived changes in the musical interactions between early childhood teachers and children in daily activities and music classes were observed.

Members of one class—12 children, aged 4 to 33 months, and their 3 teachers participated. Qualitative data included direct observations, participant-observations, interviews, documentation, and archival records collected in three phases: (a) Phase One: prior to a music teacher (the researcher) providing music classes; (b) Phase Two: during the period when a music teacher provided music classes; and (c) Phase Three: one month after music classes ended.

The musical interaction process involved three stages: initiation, continuation, and conclusion. Musical interactions were initiated by early childhood teachers and/or children. During the continuation of the interaction, the teachers’ actions and reactions were comprised of verbalization, non-verbal gesturing, modeling, accommodation, observation, imitation, utilization, and application. Children’s responses contained interactive and non-interactive behaviors. Although teachers and children might complete the interaction, the lack of a formal ending was the most frequent pattern. Teachers’ use of verbal instruction and physical manipulations to involve children decreased during the period when music classes were provided, and teachers’ ways of modeling and use of musical materials increased throughout the study. Teachers also tended to interact with
the children during daily activities in the same manner as the researcher had with the children in music class.

The principles of scaffolding that were present in all three phases included: (a) scaffolding consists of an appropriate structure, (b) scaffolding promotes self-regulation, (c) scaffolding presents a learning model for children, (d) scaffolding includes appropriate tools and signs, (e) scaffolding is temporary instruction, and (f) scaffolding assists groups and individuals. In Phases Two and Three, scaffolding process provides internalization was present. Scaffolding begins from children's previous experiences was only recognized in Phase Two and scaffolding emphasizes collaboration between adults and children was only observed in Phase Three.