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# Children's Music Education in a Second Language: A Qualitative Case Study

Acioly de Siqueira, Julianne

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Children's Music Education in a Second Language:

A Qualitative Case Study

by

Julianne Acioly de Siqueira

A THESIS

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## Abstract

This study examined how the teaching and learning processes of music and piano concepts occur in a bilingual environment when students have yet to master English as an additional language. The focus of this inquiry was on the students' learning outcomes related to music as well as the methodologies and teaching practices used by the teacher to facilitate the students' learning within the classroom. In order to understand this phenomenon, the study was conducted using the methodology of a single case study. The case was a group of immigrant children who lived in Canada for less than two years and spoke other languages than English at home. They had limited proficiency in the English language and their ages varied from 5 to 9 years old. The teacher, who was a volunteer in this study, was born in Canada and only spoke English. The study consisted of eight weekly 30-minute lessons led by the teacher. Data were collected through three different methods: Lesson observations, interviews with participants, and analysis of curriculum documents. The results indicate that three elements were essential for the learning process to happen: (1) The teacher's methodology, pedagogy, and approach; (2) the students' ways of learning—their creativity, curiosity, motivation, and behaviour; and (3) the role of a well-designed and structured curriculum that contained essential music content and introductory piano skills aimed to be taught to children ages 5 to 9 years old.

*KEYWORDS: Education, bilingual music education, second language, bilingualism, music concepts, piano skills, immigrant children, methodology, pedagogy, creativity, music and movement, play, games, tactile resources, teaching and learning*

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Teaching music to young students has become my passion. I discovered it about 15 years ago when I moved from Brazil to the United States. Teaching private piano lessons to American children was a great but challenging experience. The challenge for me was that as a Brazilian music teacher who speaks Brazilian Portuguese as my native language, I had to teach piano in English to these young American students. Although I could communicate myself in reasonably good English and had no issues in teaching piano to these children, I found myself using different strategies many times to help my students better understand musical concepts during piano lessons.

After this teaching experience in the United States, I moved back to Brazil and started a new job as a music teacher in a private Canadian bilingual elementary school in Brasilia, the Federal District of Brazil. Fifty percent of instruction in this school was in the Portuguese language and fifty percent was in English. Music lessons were delivered completely in English instruction as the school perceived arts subjects (music and drama) as a medium of instruction for second language immersion for Brazilian students.

Becoming a bilingual music educator teaching preschool to elementary students made me cognizant that the use of different teaching strategies as well as developing rapport with my students helped their learning of musical concepts. Music is *per se*, a subject that easily engages students and so, their differences are minimized in their social encounters within the music classroom (Hadi-Tabassum, 2006).

The experience of being a bilingual music teacher for many years motivated me to undertake this research to better understand how young students learn music in a second language that

they have not yet mastered. This first chapter will present the background and need for this research, pointing out the role of music in the acquisition of a second language as well as the lack of research in the literature that focuses on musical outcomes in bilingual educational settings. I also state the purpose of this study, research questions, and methodology that I used to conduct the study.

By doing an in-depth study of the music teaching and learning process in a bilingual classroom using a case study methodology, I better understood this phenomenon. I hope that this research will help other music teachers who work in similar contexts.

### **1.1 Background and Need**

Through many years of experience as a music teacher in bilingual elementary schools, I realized that children in early years of the elementary grades were able to acquire musical knowledge and concepts in a second language they had not yet mastered. Experiencing this phenomenon firsthand has motivated me to research the processes of teaching and learning music in bilingual environments. In particular, my study focused on methodologies and teaching practices.

In order to understand this phenomenon, I conducted a qualitative case study in a private music studio in Calgary, Canada. The case was bounded by a group of six immigrant children who were living in Canada for less than two years. The teacher was born in Canada and a volunteer in this study. The phenomenon investigated was the teaching and learning process of musical concepts and piano skills in a bilingual educational environment.

It is my hope that my study helps music educators better understand how children learn music

in a bilingual environment and identifies practices in bilingual music education for teaching in these contexts. The use of methodologies, techniques, approaches, music resources, and curriculum, as well as student-teacher interactions, and students' ways of learning were explored and examined to identify elements that facilitated the music learning process.

Researchers have identified similarities between language and music in that they share common structural composition traits, giving meaning to both linguistic and musical texts (Hadi-Tabassum, 2006). Many studies in the field of bilingual education suggest that the same cognitive functions are used to process both language and music and that music is a powerful tool to teach a second language (Hadi-Tabassum, 2006).

Much research has been conducted in the field of second language/bilingualism as it relates to the use of music to facilitate second language teaching. However, music itself has not been at the center or focus of the learning. In my review of the literature there were few studies with an emphasis on musical outcomes. Lowe (1995) also argues that most of the previous studies in the field of bilingual education do not demonstrate a clear interest in music learning. Instead, music is portrayed as a tool to enhance the acquisition of a second language.

There is a deficiency in this literature regarding teaching and learning processes that prioritize musical outcomes as their aims. This deficiency is seen in the field of bilingual music education where music is taught in a second/foreign language. In designing and conducting my research as a case study, I examined the lived experiences of my research participants in a real-life context. Classroom observations, interviews, and analyses of documents were performed to understand the teaching and learning process of music in a second language. The gap in the literature on the teaching and learning of musical concepts in bilingual environments and my

own experience as a bilingual music teacher in elementary schools has increased my curiosity and my motivation to understand more about this phenomenon.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The topic of my research study – “*Children’s music education in a second language: A Qualitative Case Study*” – has emerged through many years of teaching music in bilingual environments. This aroused in me an interest in understanding how children acquire musical concepts in a second language they have not yet mastered. In attempting to bound my case, I studied the phenomenon of teaching and learning musical concepts and piano skills in a second language. I considered as the unit of analysis—“the case as a single unity or a bounded system” (Merriam, 1988, p. 52)—a group of six immigrant children who were living in Canada for less than two years. They had limited proficiency in the English language as they spoke languages other than English at home. The teacher was born in Canada and spoke solely English. The study was conducted in a private music studio in Calgary, Canada.

In bilingual educational environments, the challenges associated with teaching music are compounded by the challenge of teaching a new language. This problem requires music teachers to seek out a wide range of resources for facilitating music learning that fosters a dynamic, engaging, and interesting environment for students. Temmerman (2000) states: “Studies that have reported on student attitudes towards school musical experiences suggest that methods which actively involve the learner promote a positive attitude to music and that as a result of active involvement, learning about music takes place” (p. 51).

Some research suggests that there is a symbiotic relationship between the mental processing of music and language (Lowe, 1995). In her dissertation, “*The effect of the incorporation of*

*music learning into the second language classroom on the mutual reinforcement of music and language,*” Lowe (1995) concludes: “if music and language share similar principles, structure, and mental processing mechanisms, then the inclusion of a music program stressing those music elements that are also common to language elements should have a mutual positive effect on the learning of both subject areas” (p. 25). Lowe advocates an interdisciplinary approach, and that music and language learning should both be reinforced. Furthermore, Glover and Young (1998) suggest that when teachers integrate movement, feeling, and thinking in music teaching, the learning process becomes holistic and multi-dimensional. Students gain a sense of well-being and self-worth while they engage and learn about music. Overall, as I have read in the literature, only a few of the studies related to second language acquisition, bilingualism, and music demonstrated or revealed an intrinsic interest in the teaching and learning of musical concepts in bilingual educational settings.

In summary, my research was an in-depth study of the phenomenon of teaching and learning music concepts in a real-life bilingual environment. In conducting my case study research, I explored the methodologies, techniques, approaches, and teaching strategies used by the music teacher to facilitate the learning of musical concepts and piano skills in a bilingual context. I also explored how social interactions and the construction of knowledge that happened within the music classroom between the teacher and students contributed to the acquisition of musical concepts in a second language.

It was my aim that this study helps music educators better understand how children learn music in bilingual environments and identify good teaching practices in bilingual music education.

### ***1.2.1 Purpose of the Study***

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine techniques, approaches, and methodologies used to teach music concepts and piano skills to children in bilingual educational environments. Several methodologies and approaches were analyzed in this study and detailed good teaching practices for facilitating the music-learning process.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The following questions guided my qualitative case study:

1. How do children in the early years in bilingual educational environments learn music concepts and piano skills in a second language that they have yet to master?
2. What methodologies associated with teaching practices in bilingual music education can lead to effective learning of musical concepts and piano skills?
3. How do the methodologies and teaching practices in bilingual music education used in classrooms contribute to the children's development of music skills?

### **1.4 Research Focus and Approach**

This case study research focused on a group of six immigrant students who were living in Canada for less than two years. Their ages varied from 5 to 9 years old. They spoke languages other than English at home. The teacher was born in Canada and spoke solely English. These students attended music classes at a private music studio in Calgary, Canada where the music instruction was in a second language (English). It is important to acknowledge the roles of the parents in this study. The parents had a limited level of influence on the students' learning processes because they did not have access to the

classroom during the music lessons. The study was conducted during the COVID pandemic and as a result, the number of people permitted inside the classroom was limited to the researcher, music teacher, and students. The teacher reserved some time (typically 5 minutes) after each lesson to speak with the parents and explain what was done during each music lesson and how they could help their children practice piano at home. Overall, the parents had a better understanding of the English language than their children, and facilitated communications between the teacher and the students by explaining the piano skills that were to be practiced at home. It is important to note that the parents' perspectives related to their children's music learning processes and their piano practices at home were not included in this study.

Through this study, I attempted to explore and to understand how these students acquire music concepts in a second language that they have yet to master. The investigation of this phenomenon was done through classroom observations, interviews with participants, and analysis of documents. Guiding questions in addition to the over-arching research questions were used to conduct the interviews with participants in this case study. Questions on student attitudes toward music lessons in a second language and strategies were used by the teacher to ensure students understood the activities explored.

I hope that my research will be helpful to music teachers who work with children who have not yet mastered a second language in the early years in bilingual educational environments.

This qualitative research approach was undertaken through a case study methodology.

Qualitative study is exploratory in nature and therefore enables the researcher to depict in detail the participant's real-life experience (Merriam, 1998). In using case study methodology, I captured the particularity of the case, made meaning of the case's reality, and

understood the phenomenon that is richly described in this report (Merriam, 1998).

### **1.5 Definition of Terms**

*Music Education* – The professional practice of imparting knowledge in, about, for, or through music (Elliott & Silverman, 2015, p. 18).

*Music Concepts* – Essential elements to understand music. There are seven elements: Form, harmony, melody, and rhythm as well as the expressive elements of dynamics, tempo, and timbre (tone color) (California Department of Education, 2020).

*Bilingual Environments* – Educational environments that provide “the learning of languages, cultures, and subject area content. Bilingual education strives to provide intensive language learning environments, with the potential for high academic achievement and enriched cultural experiences that maximize student opportunities for learning” (Calgary Board of Education, 2020).

*Bilingualism* – The ability of an individual or the members of a community to use two languages effectively (Nordquist, 2020).

### **1.6 Summary**

My previous experience in teaching music to children in bilingual environments propelled my interest and motivation to undertake this research and to understand how children learn music concepts in a second language that they have yet to master. As seen in the literature, previous studies demonstrated that there are similarities between language and music: They share some cognitive functions and music is considered a powerful tool to teach a second language. However, few studies in the field of second language acquisition, bilingualism,



and music, demonstrate an interest in music-based learning outcomes.

This research contributed to an understanding of the teaching and learning processes of musical concepts and piano skills in bilingual educational environments. This phenomenon was analyzed by focusing on methodologies, approaches, and teaching practices in bilingual music education through a case study methodology. The case of the study was a group of six immigrant children between the ages from 5 to 9 years old and a Canadian teacher. The research lessons were delivered in a private music studio in Calgary, Canada. The goal of this research was to help music educators better understand how children learn music in a bilingual environment, and to identify effective teaching practices in bilingual music education. By doing an in-depth study of the phenomenon of the learning and teaching processes of the music concepts and piano skills in bilingual environments in a real-life context through a bounded case, the findings of this study contribute to music education literature on music and language.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Overview

My qualitative case study explored the process of teaching and learning of music in bilingual environments focusing on teaching practices, approaches, and methodologies. I attempted to understand how children in the early years in bilingual educational environments acquire musical concepts and piano skills in a second/foreign language that they have yet to master. To understand this phenomenon, a review of the literature was completed in the fields of music, second language teaching, music education, bilingualism, piano teaching and learning, Discovery pedagogy, and children's cognitive development.

Some key areas of the literature revolving around the similarities between language and music and literature about the philosophy of music education were critically reviewed. My inquiry into the relation between language and music offers insights into the role that music plays in second language acquisition and how it should be looked at from a music outcomes perspective. The review on the philosophy of music education literature provides an understanding of the context on the teaching and learning of music. According to Elliott and Silverman (2015):

Music education must be conceived as a systematic development of musical understanding in balanced relation to progressive musical challenges. This way, music education programs will provide the optimum conditions for realizing many values and aims of music education. This means that, students will come to view the development of musical understanding as a specific kind of learning

process that they are capable of pursuing, learning, and enjoying. (p. 387).

Relevant literature in the fields of music and second language education has highlighted the mutual benefits of both subjects when they are integrated in bilingual classrooms; however, “only a few studies reporting on the relationship of music and second language development have been identified” (Lowe, 1995, p. 50). According to Lowe (1995), “no studies have investigated whether the integration of a music program incorporated into the French immersion class, based on the similarities existing between language and music, will have a beneficial effect on the mutual learning of French and music” (p. 50). She continues, “...Similarities may exist between the mental processing and principles underlying the deep and surface structures of language and music” (p. 50).

Very little is known about the process of teaching and learning musical concepts in bilingual elementary schools when the aim of this educational process is the music itself as the outcome of students’ learning. My research attempted to understand this phenomenon through an in-depth single case study. The case studied was a group of six immigrant children and a Canadian music teacher. The music lessons were held in a music studio in Calgary, Canada.

By understanding the current literature and what researchers have done previously regarding the fields of music and bilingualism, my aim for this study was to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field of music education in bilingual educational environments. To contextualize my research, I will discuss other studies that have examined interdisciplinary approaches in educational settings, children’s cognitive development, and the teaching and learning of music in the early years of education.

## 2.2 Philosophy in Music Education

Elliott and Silverman (2015) stress the importance of music education in schools and in community contexts. The authors disagree with the foundational thinking that conceives music as a matter of “pieces of music alone.” Music should be conceived in active reflection and critical action by teachers and students and must support people’s development and well-being. Music as a social praxis, also should promote positive transformation in people’s lives in specific social-cultural contexts (Elliott & Silverman, 2015).

Philosophy and music education have an important relationship for Elliott and Silverman (2015) as their view of philosophy is that “critically reflective thinking can and should aim to enable and empower people, including music teachers and learners” (p. 29). Elliott and Silverman (2015) state that “being philosophical about music teaching and learning does not mean daydreaming or making utopian pronouncements. It means basing our actions on warranted decisions, practical and ethical judgments, compassion for ‘learners,’ and careful considerations of students’ ideas, needs, desires, and dreams” (p. 29).

Teaching and learning are situated in social-cultural contexts. When teachers focus the teaching on music execution for precise performance, “music education becomes purely subject-centered rather than a continuous and harmonious process of integrating learner and subject experiences” (Elliott & Silverman, 2015, p. 112). Music educators should be “sensitive to the diversity of students’ needs,” knowledgeable about music teaching and learning and should “help students achieve the values of both music and education by being informed about the natures and values of education” (p. 115).

Elliott and Silverman (2015) elaborate on the concept of music and education as social

praxes. The socio-praxial concept of both music and education is that they must aim for and emphasize a deep and wide “range of values and human goods”...“respecting learners as individual and social agents engaged in ongoing growth toward personal-social musical thriving” (p. 151).

Elliott and Silverman’s (2015) concept of praxis (“careful and caring, thinking-and-doing for people’s holistic development”) (p.17), is multidimensional, holistic, and takes into account many aspects of music education that intrinsically relates music with persons and their social-cultural-historical contexts for full human flourishing.

According to Bowman and Frega (2012), “the point of philosophical inquiry is not to create doctrine but to engage in communicative processes dedicated to improving practice” (p. 8). They point out that “philosophical practice in music education must accommodate diversity in its own practice” (p. 10). Furthermore, Kladder (2019) notes that teachers need to change their ways of thinking and to reflect on their philosophical stances “regarding what constitutes good teaching” (pp. 6-7). He advises that teachers should “not focus entirely on final performance, but value student input and opinions” (Kladder, 2019, p.7). Teachers should also encourage students to take risks, to engage in social learning, explore their new musical creations by doing, exploring, and learning from mistakes and successes. Kladder’s (2019) assertion resonates with Elliott and Silverman’s (2015) philosophy of music education when they stress that teachers’ actions must make “careful considerations of students’ ideas, needs, desires, and dreams” (p. 29).

### **2.3 Language and Music – Similarities**

Hadi-Tabassum (2006) addresses the close relationship between language and music as they

have “structural similarities in musical and linguistic composition” (p. 219). She states that “the structural composition of both linguistic elements and musical elements is what gives meaning to both linguistic and musical texts” (p. 219). She points out that the field of bilingual education has “recognized the power of music to teach a second language such as Spanish and English through the use of vocal texts,” and that “there are also cognitive functions common in processing both language and music that are necessary for second language acquisition (p. 222).

Moreno et al. (2015) examined the immediate and lasting effects of music or second language training in early childhood. They used “event-related potentials recorded for French vowels and musical notes with children between 4 to 6 years old who received either French or music training” (p. 394). This study showed that “music and language are two cognitive domains that share many features and sensory-perceptual as well cognitive networks” (p. 394).

The studies in the field of music training and bilingualism show an enhancement of cognitive processes when “bilinguals have an increased need to manage attention to two different languages” (Bialystok et al., 2009; Green, 1998, as cited in Moreno et al., 2015, p. 394).

Music studies show “the benefits of music training for behavioral skills such as language, verbal intelligence, reading, and inhibition” (Moreno & Bidelman, 2013; Patel, 2011; Slevc, 2012 as cited in Moreno et al., 2015, p. 394). The findings in the study of Moreno et al. (2015) “indicate the bidirectional link between music and language processing” (Bidelman et al., 2013 as cited in Moreno et al., 2015, p. 402).

Milovanov & Tervaniemi (2011) conducted a study to examine the relationship between

musical aptitudes and second language linguistic skills. The results indicated that there is a close connection between music and language skills and that “music practice may also have a modulatory effect on the brain’s linguistic organization” (p. 1). Previous studies demonstrated that the earlier a person starts to practice a musical instrument, “greater are the neuroplastic effects on the brain,” as such, it seems that the “starting age plays a crucial role in foreign language acquisition skills” (p. 1). Moreover, the literature also evidenced that the action of practice music “affects language skills at both the cognitive and neural levels,” and “facilitates pitch processing” in both music and language (p. 2).

The authors explain that music and language are processed in the brain using the same cognitive functions and that music facilitates the learning of linguistic functions (Milovanov & Tervaniemi, 2011). The results of the study of Milovanov and Tervaniemi (2011) indicated that individuals with greater musical aptitude had a better “foreign language pronunciation skills”. They point out that “linguistic skills, both in production and discrimination, are interconnected with perceptual musical skills” (p. 4). Moreover, the results of this study demonstrated that both “musical and linguistic skills are partly based on the shared neural mechanisms” (p. 4). This study also demonstrated that learning a musical instrument at the very early ages contributes to boosting linguistic functions and abilities and also facilitates the “learning of academic skills” (p. 4). Other skills and functions are also benefited by musical training such as “working memory, mathematical skills, and spatial abilities” (Milovanov & Tervaniemi, 2011, p. 4).

Rukholm et al., (2018) investigated the influence of sung lyrics versus spoken lyrics “on the acquisition and retention of Italian vocabulary by adult learners in a beginner-level Italian class” (p. 154). The study was conducted with a total of 66 participants that were second

language learners in the Italian language at a post-secondary institution in Canada. The participants were divided into five groups in which four of them were exposed to a song (sung condition) and one group was exposed to the same song but in “read condition” (read as a poem). All groups “completed lexical tasks designed with low or high levels of elaboration” (p. 153). Results suggested that “song and high elaboration are effective in facilitating the acquisition and retention of second language lexical items and that song and high elaboration activities should be implemented in the second language curriculum” (Rukholm et al., 2018, p. 153).

In the literature reviewed by Rukholm et al. (2018), studies demonstrated that songs could facilitate the retention of text when the lyrics are sung. Music and lyrics are similarly associated in the brain and the “recall of one facilitates the recall of the other” (p. 154). It is also apparent that singing can support children’s lexical learning and pronunciation (Rukholm et al., 2018). The authors also highlight the similarities that exist between language and music in that they share the “same neural resources, such as the perception of pitch contour and rhythmical grouping, as well as semantic and syntactic processing” (p. 155). The association and benefits between early musical experiences and language development (reading skills and phonological awareness) in children is also mentioned in previous studies (Rukholm et al., 2018).

Likewise, similarities between language and music were also found in the reviewed literature by Busse et al. (2018) as they conducted a study with recently migrated children to analyze the effect of language learning through “alternating teaching modalities – singing and speaking” (p. 1). The authors point out that it is not only important to find effective strategies to teach a second language to migrated children as well as to support their emotional,



motivational, and psychological well-being (Busse et al., 2018). They state that “singing can have a positive effect in well-being” as well as “support language learning processes” (p.1).

Busse et al. (2018) explain that the literature suggests “an interrelationship between music and other academic domains including language learning” and it is found that second language learners who are “taught via singing showed more improvement in English vocabulary and pronunciation than students taught via speech-based methods” (p. 2). The advantages of the usefulness of songs in the learning of a second language are based on the music elements such as rhythm, tempo, and melody that facilitate the language learning process (Busse et al., 2018). The positive effects of singing on language learning is demonstrated in the literature as musical activities being considered fun and enjoyable thus, influencing positively on students’ behavior, motivation, and language acquisition (Busse et al., 2018). It is also seen that group singing can have a positive effect towards cooperation and empathy among students in the classroom (Busse et al., 2018).

The results of the study of Busse et al. (2018) were positive. Students recalled the songs’ lyrics, “made significant learning progress on the language knowledge test” (p. 7), and it was perceived a positive effect on the students’ motivation when using the singing method over the speaking modality to teach the second language (Busse et al., 2018). They state that the use of song “in combination with or in addition to traditional teaching methods appears promising from both a linguistic and an educational perspective” (Busse et al., 2018, p. 9).

Yet, Fonseca and Gant (2016) draw insights about the relationship between language and music. They point out that both subjects are topics of different research fields such as psychology, musicology, neuroscience, health studies, and education. Undoubtedly, language

and music have an interplay that leads different fields of study in trying to understand, for instance, “the affective power of music and words” (Fonseca & Gant, 2016, p. 2), the benefits of music in second language acquisition, and the effect of music and language in human’s well-being (Fonseca & Gant, 2016).

Fonseca and Gant (2016) state that “music and language are two innate human capacities” (p. 3), hence we can benefit from both. Music can improve linguistic cognitive processes and provides emotional elements that facilitate language learning (Fonseca & Gant, 2016). Moreover, music creates an engaged and motivated language teaching and learning environment which “facilitate the memorization of instructions, vocabulary, structures and pronunciation” (Fonseca & Gant, 2016, p. 17).

Giauque (1985) also pointed out similarities between second language and music learning. (As cited in Lowe, 1995, p. 15). He declares: “what is apparent in both areas of study is the potential for performance, mastery, a sense of history, and appreciation of culture” (as cited in Lowe, 1995, p. 15). Music and rhyme are two elements that enable students to learn a second language holistically and allow the learner to be “immersed in a culture where that language is spoken” (Fonseca and Gant, 2016, p. 15).

Ludke et al. (2013) conducted a study with sixty adult participants who spoke English as their native language. The participants were randomly assigned to three different groups to participate in “three ‘listen-and-repeat’ learning conditions: Speaking, rhythmic speaking, or singing” of an unfamiliar language – Hungarian (p. 41). The results demonstrated that “participants in the singing condition showed superior overall performance on a collection of Hungarian language tests after a 15-minutes learning period, as compared with participants

in the speaking and rhythmic speaking conditions” (Ludke et al., 2013, p. 41).

The authors state that it is common in foreign language teaching practices to use music increasingly and that songs facilitate the acquisition of second language vocabulary (Ludke et al., 2013). Research in the field of cognitive neuroscience demonstrated a close relationship between music and language “at the neural processing level” and that some elements of music such as rhythm and melody “were effective facilitators of verbal recall for folk song lyrics, as compared with the spoken version” (Ludke et al., 2013, p. 42). Previous studies also showed that “listening to songs and singing can facilitate verbal learning and memory” besides to support many “foreign language skills” (Ludke et al., 2013, p. 43).

The results from the study of Ludke et al., (2013) demonstrated that “singing was more effective as a learning condition than either speaking or rhythmic speaking” and that “singing can support second language learning” (p. 49). Based on previous studies, they attributed these results due to the use of simple melodies employed in this study and that the “pitch musical structure contributed to verbal learning and memory” suggesting that “melodic structures may have a stronger encoding distinctiveness than rhythmic structures” (p. 50).

Musicologists Macarthur and Trojer (1985) declare that “due to the fact that music and language share basic features of rhythm, pitch, tone, and dynamics, the teaching methods applied in the classroom with the aim to teach music should definitely engage Orff-Schulwerk” (as cited in Kovacikova, 2018, p. 3). Carl Orff (1895-1982) “developed the method of teaching music by providing the space for improvisations with the use of songs, rhymes, xylophones, and percussions” (Kovacikova, 2018, p. 3). Accordingly, language structures and musical forms such as “themes, variations and rondos can be experienced

through singing songs in a foreign language” (Kovacikova, 2018, p. 3). Thus, the learning on both “music and second language are common features which can be beneficial in language and music teaching” (p. 5).

## **2.4 Interdisciplinary Curriculum**

According to Akhtar et al. (2013), “the attraction of using music as a tool for learning not only lies in its ability to engage and excite children, but also in its ability to reduce anxieties associated with language learning” (p. 24). They point out that “learning through group activities such as singing and musical games reduce the need for individuals to ‘perform’ in front of their peer group and allow skills to be practiced within the safety of the group” (Akhtar et al., 2013, p. 24). As seen in the current literature, “evidence from a variety of fields suggests that instruction in music can have strong cross-curricular benefits” (Akhtar et al., 2013, p. 22). They conclude that “linking musical activities to lesson themes proved to be a key aspect in improving pupil learning” (Akhtar et al., 2013, p. 25).

Lowe (2002) conducted a study “to determine whether the interdisciplinary art/language learning strategies utilized, reinforced both language and music learning” (p. 13). This study was a collaborative project between teachers of second grade classrooms and the researcher. The objective was to integrate “music and other forms of arts into the language arts curriculum” (p. 14). In regard to the outcomes of learning in both language and music, students improved in singing and playing instruments, and improved the language skills of reading and oral composition. The study produced positive outcomes as teachers were actively engaged in this collaborative research project and students were very much motivated to participate. Teaching and pedagogical strategies also were key factors for the

success of this research (Lowe, 2002).

Lowe (1995) is enthusiastic about the incorporation of music into the second language classroom within an interdisciplinary approach. She points out that “Music educators should recognize that helping to make an integration approach successful is to their advantage because it gives more importance to music as a viable learning source and ultimately, the importance of the music program itself can be reinforced” (p. 118).

The literature shows that interdisciplinary approaches help students to better understand and remember what they learn in classrooms, which is also applicable for music learning (Perkins, 1993 and Williams & Reynolds, 1993 as cited in Lowe, 1998, p. 34). According to Lowe (1998) “researchers in second-language education (Arellano & Draper, 1975; Claerr & Gargon, 1984; Dominguez, 1991; de Frece, 1995; Eterno, 1961; Failoni, 1993; Foster, 1993; Jolly, 1975; Little, 1983; Lozanov & Gateva, 1988) suggest that the incorporation of music into the second language is a viable teaching strategy and should be considered. However, none of these studies considered such an interdisciplinary approach on music learning” (as cited in Lowe 1998, p. 34). It is essential, especially for music educators, that whenever they decide to conduct an interdisciplinary lesson, they ensure that music learning must be the aim of the integration approach. In this manner, music education will be seen as valuable as other school subjects (Lowe, 1998).

The literature also reveals that interdisciplinary approaches are advantageous for the teaching and learning of heritage languages as well. Charalambous and Yerosimou (2015) conducted a research project in a community Greek school in London with ten children in grade 3 whose ages ranged between seven and eight. They examined the learning of the Heritage language – Cypriot Greek – by these students who had parents and/or grandparents that

spoke Greek. This project was conducted using an interdisciplinary approach: Teaching the heritage language through music, drama, and media. The authors explain that an “interdisciplinary approach to learning generates knowledge that is more holistic than the knowledge built in discipline-specific studies” and as such, “seeks meaningful connections between and among disciplines” (Charalambous & Yerosimou, 2015, p. 370). The goal of this study was to examine “whether drama, music, and media can advance students’ heritage language learning and in what ways they can be effective in this attempt” (Charalambous & Yerosimou, 2015, p. 370).

Charalambous and Yerosimou (2015) elaborate the concept of drama as a “multimodal pedagogy” in which different modes are used such as “verbal and non-verbal to convey new knowledge” (p. 375). In this project, the use of drama in the learning of heritage language helped students to enhance their self-expression and communication through the body (Charalambous & Yerosimou, 2015). Texts were explored through drama and games. Vocabulary learning and pronunciation were practiced through musical activities. The authors noted that the use of drama during this project enabled students to free their emotions and created a space where students “felt safe to practice the language while raising their levels of self-confidence and their attitudes towards Greek school” (Charalambous & Yerosimou, 2015, p. 376).

Charalambous and Yerosimou (2015) highlight the benefits of music to teach language and other subject areas and its importance in the classroom including improvement of students’ attention and focus, creation of a positive environment and enhancement of students’ “attitudes toward content and learning” (p. 376). Previous studies, such as in Lowe (2002) “attempted to integrate music with language arts and that showed positive outcomes and

benefits of this integration” (Charalambous & Yerosimou, 2015, p .376). The authors also point out the relationship between music and language and the advantage of using music in the language learning process. In Charalambous and Yerosimou’s (2015) study, music was used to enhance the learning of heritage language. Students were able to “create soundscapes, sound effects, and compose melodies” in their dramatic performance (p. 377). They also had opportunity to play percussion instruments and used body movement and gestures to represent their ideas and feelings during drama activities. The authors noted that music also improved students’ “pronunciation of words and letters” (Charalambous & Yerosimou, 2015, p .377). Charalambous and Yerosimou (2015) highlighted that “the learning objectives of this project were not musical” nevertheless, students “were introduced to musical components such as rhythmical patterns and the notion of pulse, through singing games” (p. 377).

The use of digital media (laptops, cameras, voice, and sound recorders) was also used by the students in this project to “video-record the scenes of the story that they would act out” (Charalambous & Yerosimou, 2015, p. 378). According to the authors, through the data collected in this study, they perceived that “digital media affected the way in which students conceived and understood themselves as learners of the Greek language, engaged in new forms of expression and saw themselves as learners within a group” (Charalambous & Yerosimou, 2015, p. 378).

In conclusion, the study of Charalambous and Yerosimou (2015) demonstrated that an interdisciplinary approach is a powerful pedagogy in the teaching and learning of heritage language and that music, drama, and media contributed to improving students’ learning experiences. They observed that student interest and motivation in learning Greek had

improved. This study also helped the authors to understand “the importance of fostering active participation of the learners in the learning process and in the school life context” (Charalambous & Yerosimou, 2015, p. 380).

Similarly, Rodriguez-Bonces (2017) developed a study which proposed a “curriculum that integrates music and drama as strategies for the teaching of English as a foreign language” (p. 203). The curriculum designed in this study seeks to promote the development of the English language proficiency in children who attend “continuing educational programs at any higher education institution” (Rodriguez-Bonces, 2017, p. 203). The author explains that an interdisciplinary curriculum provides meaningful learning and creates positive attitudes in children towards learning of English as a second language (Rodriguez-Bonces, 2017). The study had the objective to design a curriculum that contained methodological strategies to teach English as a second language through drama and music to students from the ages of 7 to 11 years old (Rodriguez-Bonces, 2017). The author points out that “any curriculum should consider, among other aspects, the interests and needs of students, set clear content learning outcomes, guide learning strategies, set the hours of instruction, and strengthen students’ skills and knowledge” (Rodriguez-Bonces, 2017, p. 205).

According to Rodriguez-Bonces (2017), the use of drama in the second language classroom provides and enhances children’s social interactions and thus, facilitating language communication. Interdisciplinary curriculum provides numerous and diverse activities to promote “motivation and self-confidence, betterment of communication skills, authentic language use, and proper pronunciation” (Rodriguez-Bonces, 2017, p. 206). Rodriguez-Bonces (2017) explains that children love music, and this is a key factor of motivation for them to learn a second language. The author states that “the relationship between music and



language has to do with motivation, development of concepts, learning environments, and creativity” (Rodriguez-Bonces, 2017, p. 207). An interdisciplinary curriculum when integrating the arts into the English language class has the potential to offer a wide pallet of activities stimulating students’ learning and increasing their motivation (Rodriguez-Bonces, 2017). This is maximized when the curriculum attends “the needs and interests of the learners” thus improving students’ “cognitive potential through the arts” (p. 211).

As seen in the music education literature, interdisciplinary projects are extremely valuable as they help and enable the learning of different skills and subjects by students throughout school years (Bolduc, 2009). Although many studies show effectiveness in interdisciplinary approaches, music educators must be mindful about the role of music when they implement such projects. For instance, Barry (2008) is concerned with issues on integrated curriculum, with special attention to implications for music teacher education. She points out two models of integrated curriculum: one in which music is used as a tool to teach a different subject, and another wherein music and other academic subjects are equally honoured. It is essential that in any interdisciplinary project, music educators “integrate with integrity” (Snyder, 1996 as cited in Barry 2008, p. 36), honouring both music and other academic subjects. In this manner, music will not be placed “in a subservient role to other subjects” (Barry, 2008, p. 33).

Concerns regarding different definitions and types of integrated curriculum were also addressed by Viladot and Cslovjecsek (2014). The authors are in favour of an integrated approach between music and language within the classroom. They believe that integrating different school subjects in the classroom is a way to promote holistic educational experiences in teaching and learning and provides cognitive gains to students. Viladot and

Cslovjecsek (2014) explain that there are a variety of definitions and styles of integration that range from “*thematic integration, knowledge integration*” (Burton, 2001 as cited in Viladot & Cslovjecsek, 2014, p. 2), to “*subservient, co-equal and cognitive, affective, and social*” styles (Bresler, 1995 as cited in Viladot & Cslovjecsek, 2014, p. 2). However, Wiggins (2001) does not consider the “*subservient*” style proposed by Bresler (1995) as an integrated approach as it puts one discipline in an unfavorable position compared to the other (Viladot & Cslovjecsek, 2014). Snyder (2001) is concerned with the integrity of both disciplines in an integrated approach. He argues that a broad theme should be chosen in a way that is embraced by both disciplines and thus explored in a meaningful way to maintain their integrity (Viladot & Cslovjecsek, 2014).

In this light, Viladot and Cslovjecsek (2014) wrote an article based on a training course in “integrated work on music and foreign language for teachers from different educational levels” (p. 5), who participated in a continuous professional development course called *Do you speak... music?* Part of the project, “European Music Portfolio: A Creative way into languages,” was funded by the European Union (EU). The objective of the project was to “integrate musical activities in foreign language education” and to explore “how the teaching and learning of the two subjects can provide mutual support and motivation” (p. 5). The goal of the course “*Do you speak...music?*” was “to encourage teachers to work more creatively while integrating language and music learning in their classrooms” (p. 6). The course took place in Switzerland and Spain during the years of 2011 and 2012 and the teacher-participants were European in-service teachers with much classroom experience. Five teachers participated in interviews about interdisciplinarity that were conducted by the authors after the course was completed. They wanted to gain insights “into the different ways

in which teachers deal with the challenges of integrated music and language teaching” (Viladot & Cslovjecsek, 2014, p. 8). The authors strongly support teachers’ continuous training as they believe “it provides tools to boost teacher’s creativity” (p. 4).

After the analysis of the teacher’s interviews, Viladot and Cslovjecsek (2014) identified several categories. One is related to the *teacher’s educational approach* as the teachers believe that their role is to guide the students in their learning processes as well as interact with them in the classroom. The second category is related to the *teacher’s attitude* as they believe that good teachers take students as “individuals with their own interests and particularities” (p. 9). *Methodology* came up as the third category. These teachers adapt their methodology “to their own teaching preferences” and to “students’ motivations and spontaneous suggestions instead of implementing it as a manual” (p. 9). The authors state that “they [teachers] use music as strategy to introduce and work on language content” (p. 9). The fourth category is related to *requirements and needs*. These teachers commit more time from their schedules to work with other teachers so that they can properly implement an integrated curriculum in the classroom. This way, together these teachers can discuss and plan projects in this type of educational approach (Viladot & Cslovjecsek, 2014). The fifth category is related to the *conception of music* by these teachers. Music is seen as a powerful tool “for social interaction between teacher and students” (p. 9). They are convinced that by using an integrated teaching approach and new methodologies, music and language learning can be promoted (Viladot & Cslovjecsek, 2014).

The teacher’s interviews offered deep insights into Viladot and Cslovjecsek’s (2014) understandings of an integrated framework to support teachers implementing this approach in the classroom. It appears that, for these teachers, music is a useful strategy to teach

language in an integrated approach as it provides enjoyment, fun, and a relaxing atmosphere in the classroom. According to Viladot and Cslovjecsek (2014), “their experience indicates an understanding of music as either a teaching tool (Wiggins, 2001), or as a subservient type in an integration framework (Bresler, 1995)” (p. 11). The authors explain that, in light of this understanding, they will take these considerations into account in planning future teachers’ professional development courses “in order to provide them with a more explicit theoretical framework” (Viladot & Cslovjecsek, 2014, p. 11).

Music and language subjects are treated equally in students’ learning outcomes when taught in an integrated approach within the project called *European Music Portfolio: A Creative Way into Languages* (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012). This is a project that enables primary-level teachers to teach language and music skills to children through an integrated approach (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012). They provide materials and continuous professional development, training European teachers to teach both language and music skills. They emphasize “the interrelationships between music and language” (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012, p. 4).

The project “was developed by an international team of language and music educators, and researchers” (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012, p. 4) who advocate for several advantages in integrating music and language into the classroom. Firstly, they stress that language and music are naturally connected in that both abilities share cognitive functions as previous studies in neuroscience research have suggested. Secondly, it is known that music can promote a positive, fun, and relaxing classroom atmosphere providing “positive affective, motivational, and cognitive benefits for students” (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012, p. 6), which facilitates language learning. The literature suggests that songs facilitate learning in

vocabulary, intonation, speaking, and grammar skills (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012). Thirdly, educators and researchers advocate that music and language can be taught in a creative way, and as such, creativity is strongly supported and promoted by the *European Music Portfolio* project into the integration of music and language within the classroom (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012). The project aims “to reduce language barriers, foster co-operative learning, and increase social integration within and between different European countries” (p. 7). The integrated approach of the project also has the aim to “nurture self-confidence, self-expression, creativity, and to improve intercultural understanding and sensitivity” (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012, p. 7).

Ludke & Weinmann (2012) reinforce that teachers must consider the learning goals “within a holistic developmental framework” (p. 17), when planning musical activities for their students. Teachers must consider each individual’s way and pace of learning, students’ ideas in the learning process to keep students motivated and foster a positive learning environment (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012). The literature in the field of second language and music suggests that musical activities effectively support learning, increase students’ focus and attention, and can integrate knowledge across different disciplines (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012). The *European Music Portfolio* project approaches ten categories of musical activities as the means to integrate language and music. Among these categories are: Singing, rhythmic vocalization, playing instruments, listening to music, dancing and moving, composing, and conducting music. These activities are interconnected and provide many “possibilities for integrating music into the language classroom” (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012, p. 18).

Music and language are both communication systems and as such, they are “used to express and communicate ideas and feelings” (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012, p. 31). The authors

explain that to reach music learning outcomes in the language classroom when music is used as a tool for language teaching and learning it is necessary to develop students' "listening skills, musicianship, musical awareness and understanding, musical creativity, and composition" (p. 31). Ludke & Weinmann (2012) believe that music has the potential to motivate and inspire students to learn a new language while they develop musical skills. Teachers that provide a variety of musical experiences for their students are also strengthening their "musicianship and cultivating their musical interests and skills" (p. 31). Due to the similarities of elements shared between language and music such as rhythm and melody, students can learn both domains. The authors point out that oral skill can be developed through musical activities and that at the same time it helps students to overcome language and speech difficulties (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012). Foreign language skills can be developed by musical activities that encompass active listening. Listening to songs can promote "pronunciation and fluency, and proper intonation of spoken phrases in a new language" (p. 34). Previous studies have shown that higher memory retrieval is activated when the individual combines music elements such as melodies, rhythms, and rhymes in songs previously learned (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012).

Musical activities also bring cultural awareness into the classroom. The authors strongly recommend that teachers foster cultural diversity in their practice by bringing different kinds of music from different times, places, and cultures. By doing this, teachers promote rich and fun cultural and musical experiences while triggering students' motivation to learn a foreign language (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012). Music has the power to offer successful collaborations amongst students and enhance social interactions within the classroom.

According to Ludke and Weinmann (2012), music can also enhance students' self-esteem. In

an integrated approach of teaching and learning music and language, the activities are developed in dynamic and fun ways, giving the students a sense of success, engagement, and progress in learning. As a result, motivation is triggered, facilitating the learning of a new language. Moreover, researchers also suggest that music can lower anxiety and stress in language learning by promoting a relaxing, interactive, and fun atmosphere in the learning environment.

In conclusion, the support that the literature in the fields of language and music education brings to the *European Music portfolio* project suggests there is a link between the domains of language and music. The authors believe that the students' learning outcomes in both disciplines can be reached when the teachers apply proper pedagogical approaches to language and music, bringing both subjects to the same level of importance. Moreover, it is paramount to take into account students' needs, ways, and paces of learning as well as their interests, motivation, previous knowledge, creativity, and ideas (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012).

In fact, the literature shows that integrated curriculum/interdisciplinary approach as a medium of teaching and learning of other subjects through the arts is substantially effective, however it also reveals that "learning in the arts is generally overlooked" (Barry, 2008, p. 33).

## **2.5 Children's Cognitive Development**

Piaget believed that human's cognitive structures are organized even "before exposure to the environment" (Piaget, 1952, as cited in Taggart & Gouzouasis, 1995, p. 10). Psychologists believe there are two factors that contribute to cognitive development: One of them is humans' innate abilities (such as the learning of music) and another is environmental

influences (Taggart & Gouzouasis, 1995).

Taking into account these two factors that contribute to the positive cognitive development of children, it is important that music educators be attentive to provide wide and diverse musical experiences to children, especially in early childhood. These include different styles and genres of music for children to sing and dance. It is recommended that children fully experience and embody all kinds of music. By providing rich musical experiences, music teachers are contributing to optimizing the cognitive development of children (Taggart & Gouzouasis, 1995).

Some music education practices have been influenced by Piaget's Theory (Zimmerman, 1984). The theory was applied by Zimmerman (1984) in one of her studies that involved musical learning and development. Zimmerman found that individuals develop musical intelligence through interaction with music and environmental sounds, and that "the rhythm of musical growth moves from perception to imitation to improvisation" (Zimmerman, 1984, p. 33). Furthermore, it is essential that music educators have an awareness of children's stages of development and that "learning involves an active interchange between cognitive structures and information from the environment" (Gruhn & Rauscher, 2002, p. 446).

McMahon (1992) also investigated possible contributions of music to the development of cognitive skills. Experiences that children develop with the environment influence their ideas and ways of thinking. When children explore these environmental experiences, "organising into meaningful sequences" (p. 16), their cognitive skills are developed. For instance, this happens when they start to learn a language, acquiring a vocabulary of sounds by using imitative and symbolic play. This type of activity also helps for a "later formation of musical



concepts” (Moorehead & Pond, 1978 as cited in McMahon, 1992, p. 15).

Each child has their own individual experiences and unique development. Several factors such as cognitive skills, individual ways of learning, and individual development have connections with early musical development; however, this relationship “may not always be immediately apparent” (McMahon, 1992, p. 15-16). Thus, the “outcomes of innate ability and the child’s interaction and experience with the environment will depend on these factors” (McMahon, 1992, p. 15).

On the other hand, studies in the field of psychology demonstrate that musical training can positively affect verbal memory skills in children. Roden et al., (2012) examined the effects of a school-based instrumental music program on children’s development of verbal and visual memory skills. A total of 73 children participated in this study and “they were recruited from seven primary schools located in different parts of Germany” (Roden et al., 2012, p. 2). The students were arranged in three groups: 25 children in the music group, 25 students in the natural science group, and 23 children were assigned in a group that did not receive additional training, serving as controls. The music group received music training in singing, rhythm, pitch identification, and on musical instruments of their choice. The music program was taught by music teachers from public music schools. Children in the natural science group received training in mathematics and general studies (Roden et al., 2012). Findings from Roden et al. (2012) indicated that after 18 months, children in the music group demonstrated “a greater increase on every measure of verbal memory compared to the natural science and the control group” (p. 4).

The authors point out previous neuropsychological studies that suggest “musically trained

children develop efficient memory strategies for words, which are represented as auditory codes” and that “music training affects the neuroplasticity of the brain” (Roden et al., 2012, p. 7). Scholars from the neuropsychology field argued that “music is a powerful tool for modeling neural structures and functions via general auditory processing such as speech, and that might benefit musicians “in their verbal memory performances” (Roden et al., 2012, p. 7). The literature also suggests that “music training might promote cognitive mechanisms that underlie children’s literacy, language development, as well as reading abilities” (p. 7). The authors stated that previous studies “argue for a positive transfer effect from musical expertise onto speech and language processing” (Roden et al., 2012, p. 7).

The findings from Roden et al. (2012) extended previous studies “by showing that children receiving music lessons demonstrated larger improvements of verbal memory skills than the control group children” (p. 7). It was also shown that music training “affects memory for verbal rather than visual materials” (p. 8). Roden et al. (2012) highlight the importance and benefits of music education “for children at primary schools, and pre-schools in terms of their cognitive development, and language acquisition” (p. 8).

## **2.6 Music Teaching and Learning in the Early Years**

Regarding music teaching and learning in schools, studies in the literature show that students have a more positive attitude toward music learning when teachers use methods that actively engage them in musical experiences. Moreover, teacher’s acknowledgment of students’ musical interests and their previous knowledge, as well practical musical activities and a supportive educational environment are key factors for students’ success (Temmerman, 2000). It is also seen in the literature that the earlier a child has experiences with music in

educational settings, the greater their chances for later success in their musical development and learning. There are coherences of ideas between Feierabend (1990) and Cass-Beggs (1990) in this matter as they both advocate for an early stimulus of music in childhood. The latter points out that “if first experiences are enjoyable it often leads to a life-long interest in and positive attitudes towards music” (As cited in Temmerman 2000, p. 53).

One of the ways of doing joyful musical experiences is integrating action in music classes. Children learn more when they move, embody, and feel the music. Movement becomes a medium for students to understand music. A holistic learning approach that integrates movement, thinking, and feeling provides a sense of well-being and self-worth in students besides the learning of music itself (Glover and Young, 1998).

Accordingly, music and movement are natural activities for children. Their bodies respond freely to music and thus the sense of well-being is gained. As these bodily responses become more conscious to children their awareness of the self also increases (Aronoff, 1988).

The choice of repertoire and musical activities in general must be well selected in the instruction of music within the classroom. Music teachers must consider the developmental stages of children so that the choice of songs and the plan of lessons are “developmentally appropriate for the students” (Allen, 1992, p. 25). Other important factors to be considered are the variety of repertoire, which must include quality music (vocal and instrumental), folk songs, and the length of the songs within the repertoire. This last factor must be “compatible with the attention span of the listener” (Allen, 1992, p. 26). When music teachers are attentive to these points, music learning is facilitated and hence students should enjoy music (Allen, 1992).

The use of multicultural music, such as Folk songs within the music classrooms, has its many advantages and it can be introduced before classical music studies. Folk music offers understanding, cultural enrichment, and awareness and appreciation of other cultures.

Furthermore, as music educators, it is essential that besides simply teaching music to our students, we could also offer “cultural understanding” (Sousa, 1992, p. 28).

Musical activities are also recognized as a means to create positive social relationships among children and to promote “cooperative behaviors within group” (Good & Russo, 2016, p. 340). Good and Russo (2016) conducted a study in Toronto, Canada during a summer camp with fifty children who had different socioeconomic backgrounds. They explored the influence of music (singing) in promoting cooperation in a diverse group of primary-school aged children. Participants were divided in three groups that participated in three different activities: Group singing, group arts, and competitive games. Results demonstrated that “children who engaged in group singing were more cooperative than children who engaged in group art or competitive games” (p. 340).

Good and Russo (2016) point out that singing is a form of music that can easily be performed in a group and does not require training, but it requires cooperation among members, and it can promote creative expression and synchronization of body movements.

Previous studies in the psychology field, have shown that “movement synchrony can influence interpersonal affiliation,” thus facilitating cooperative behaviors among members, making “individuals to behave in ways that benefit the group” (Good & Russo, 2016, pp. 340-341).

The results of the study of Good and Russo (2016) demonstrated that group singing exhibited

a higher level of cooperation than the other groups (art group, and competitive games) and that joint music making had a positive influence on cooperative behavior among children. The authors argue that “singing may have helped to foster a collective identity” as “cooperation is linked to social cohesion” (Good & Russo, 2016, p. 343). They also argue that “cooperative gains are the result of movement synchrony” and that joint music making fostered “positive social relations” within the group (Good & Russo, 2016, p. 343).

## **2.7 Discussion**

In my review of the literature, I found commonalities in the topics that encompass language and music. The commonalities are in relation to two aspects: 1) that music and language share the use of the same cognitive functions to be processed in the brain, and 2) that music is seen as a powerful tool for second language acquisition.

According to Hadi-Tabassum (2006) Music education has been in “a growing resurgence due to its celebrated cognitive benefits” (p. 220). Hadi-Tabassum (2006) acknowledges that the field of bilingual education has been benefited by music. Using vocal texts, music has shown to be a powerful tool to teach second languages such as Spanish and English. Although the author’s focus is second language development, it was interesting to see that besides music’s cognitive benefits, music was also recognized by its emotional and social benefits as students were feeling more confident to use the second language through music (Hadi-Tabassum, 2006). As my research focused on the opposite, that is, the acquisition of musical concepts by children in a bilingual environment, this chapter provided me valuable information related to a teaching methodology and approach because it examined the implementation of a Spanish folk music program in a school in which the students “could increase their levels of

Spanish language proficiency and their discursive knowledge of music through the singing of Spanish folk songs” (p. 224).

It was also interesting to see that the teacher’s pedagogical approach in this Spanish folk music program contributed to developing a highly motivated learning environment amongst students and hence to their learning of music and second language skills. Her holistic teaching approach and the use of folk songs created a sense of community in the music classroom, where students could share their socio-cultural experiences through music. Hadi-Tabassum (2006) points out “that when music is performed in a social context it can sustain a sense of community and become social cement for creating cohesion and continuity” (p. 231).

The positive effects in cooperation, empathy, and social relations using music in the language classroom were widely discussed and emphasized in the literature of second language, psychology, and music fields (Busse et al., 2018; Good and Russo, 2016; Ludke & Weinmann, 2012; Medina, 2002). Music is an activity that is routinely presented in the students’ lives either in listening, singing songs, or dancing. It is an enjoyable activity for students, and as a result, the use of songs in the second language classroom makes their level of relaxation and confidence increase, making the learning process of a second language easy and fun for them (Medina, 2002). The extra benefit of using music in the second language classroom is that music provides a fun and positive learning environment in addition to producing a sense of community amongst students (Medina, 2002).

Alinte (2013) also examined the effects and positive social benefits of using songs in a second language classroom. The author conducted a study with students in the seventh grade

who learned English as a second foreign language. The study aimed to investigate “the effectiveness of using songs to teach English grammar to second language students” (Alinte, 2013, p. 7). The students were grouped in two different groups: Experimental and control groups: In the former, English grammar was taught using songs, and in the second group grammar was taught based on traditional methods. The same teacher and programme were used for both groups.

The results of this research study demonstrated that the students in the experimental group found that “songs helped them learn more and also increased their level of motivation” (Alinte, 2013, p. 7). The author points out that it is important to teach grammar to second language students as it helps to improve communication in a foreign language even though students find “grammar difficult to understand” (Alinte, 2013, p. 8). Alinte (2013) also refers to activities such as music and play that promote a fun atmosphere in the classroom and are good resources in the teaching and learning of a second language. She states that “Children have an amazing ability to absorb language through play, music, jokes or anything which they can find enjoyable” (p. 8).

In Alinte’s (2013) study, the students reported “greater enjoyment in the foreign language class” when the songs were added as a resource for learning the second language. Also, the songs helped them “learn more efficiently than other methods used in the classroom” (Alinte, 2013, p. 23). In addition, Alinte’s study demonstrated that songs promoted a relaxed and fun atmosphere within the learning environment. The students showed enthusiasm and motivation to learn the second language. Cooperation amongst students during activities was also evident as were “improvements in students’ pronunciations” (Alinte, 2013, p. 23).

The results of Alinte’s (2013) study demonstrate that the use of songs promoted motivation

and cooperation amongst students and created a fun and relaxing classroom atmosphere (Alinte, 2013). The author points out that, songs provide “authentic speech that is slowed, rhythmic, and repetitious” which could be considered as a “useful tool to improve the students’ learning of English” (Alinte, 2013, p. 24).

The literature shows the positive effects of music in creating a sense of community and cooperation among students, making it an excellent vehicle to create social relations in the classroom. The literature also reveals the numerous benefits associated with the use of music as a tool to teach a second language. Medina (2002) states that music “helps second language learners acquire vocabulary and grammar, improve spelling and develop the linguistic skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening” (p. 1). To acquire new vocabulary in a second language, Medina (2002) supports the idea of using extra linguistic resources such as “illustrations, actions, and photos” (p. 2), to help to convey the meaning of new words. The author states that “meaning is critical to the acquisition of second language vocabulary,” and for this, story songs are excellent resources compared to oral stories (Medina, 2002, p. 2). Students can be presented with “pictures, illustrations, photos or gestures,” facilitating the acquisition of second language (Medina, 2002, p. 3).

Music was also used as one of the resources to teach a heritage language (Mandarin Chinese) to a group of Chinese children in Du’s (2017) study. Du (2017) conducted a case study with four Chinese children aged six years old and two Chinese teachers to investigate how these children learn their heritage language in a community language school in Ontario, Canada. The author investigated the “Chinese children’s heritage language learning from a multimodal lens” (Du, 2017, p. 4).

Du (2017) views literacy learning as being a process that is socially and culturally



constructed where “children have an active role in their language socialization” (p. 5). The author situated their study “in the multiliteracies framework” in which literacy learning is viewed as “making uses of different modes to make meaning of the surroundings and effectively communicate with texts and people in different contexts” (Du, 2017, p. 5). In this study, the teachers used different resources such as body gestures, movements, sound effects, music, drawings, images, craft making and nursery rhymes to teach Mandarin Chinese to the students. The teachers also used “traditional Chinese practices (repetitive reading and writing skills)” in combination with these multimodal elements (Du, 2017, p. 9).

The students demonstrated their learning and understanding of Chinese characters through different means. For example, they used movements and body and facial expressions to “demonstrate how they understood the meaning and structure of the Chinese character that represents ‘Family’” (Du, 2017, p. 10). Thus, the use of multimodal elements in combination with the traditional methods of teaching Chinese, made the students’ learning processes enjoyable and fun (Du, 2017).

Music was also used to teach Mandarin Chinese during this study. According to the teachers, it was “an effective way to engage children in reading lyrics and how to use words in a specific context” (Du, 2017, p. 11). Music brought meaningful ways of learning for these students as well as helped “children’s understanding words, reading text, and practicing language use in contexts” (Du, 2017, p. 11).

Du (2017) concludes that the learning of Chinese Mandarin language can be “multimodal and engaging” (p. 13). Teachers can use traditional methods of teaching Chinese in combination with multimodal elements providing different ways to students to demonstrate

their learning – through music, crafts, body gestures, movement, actions, and drawings. Du (2017) also points out that it is important that teachers take into account “students’ needs and interests and provide different opportunities and materials to scaffold children’s multimodal Chinese literacy learning” (p. 14).

Fernandez-Garcia and Fonseca-Mora (2019) also recognize that music plays “an important role in foreign language learning” as it “affects cognitive aspects such as memory and attention” as well as “induces complex emotions and leads to strong emotional experiences” (pp. 127-128). Likewise, the use of songs and audiovisual materials are considered good strategies in helping adolescents to learn a foreign language. Music plays an important role in this stage of age as it serves as a “medium for adolescents’ emotional self-regulation, peer-group affiliation, and identity formation” (Fernandez-Garcia & Fonseca-Mora, 2019, p. 128). The authors point out that, songs provide “structural and melodic repetitions as well as conversational speech throughout lyrics which are easy to remember” (p. 129). In addition, songs can provide a fun and relaxing classroom atmosphere keeping students motivated and interested in learning the second language (Fernandez-Garcia & Fonseca-Mora, 2019).

Degrave (2019) highlights the numerous benefits of using music in a foreign language classroom despite second language teachers’ hesitation to integrate music in their classes. According to Degrave (2019) this may be due to “a limited knowledge of adapted material and a lack to theoretical grounding to support the use of music in the foreign language classroom” (p. 412). In this context, Degrave (2019) aimed to examine “how and why music can be used in the foreign language classroom” by describing “some musical methodologies used for language acquisition” as well as reviewing previous studies about the “potential benefits of music-related methodologies for language acquisition and for specific linguistic

skills” (p. 412).

Degrave’s (2019) study reported that previous researchers revealed that the use of music benefits the acquisition of a second language, generating “a positive effect on general learning aspects (motivation, attention, decrease in anxiety level, and cultural enrichment) as well as on different linguistic skills” (p. 418). The author details that overall, the literature shows that linguistic improvement (foreign language performance) was perceived when music-related methodologies such as background instrumental music, songs, and rhythmic activities were incorporated to teach a second language (Degrave, 2019). Thus, it can be inferred that music is beneficial for the acquisition of a second language and should not be seen as merely a “fun activity” in the foreign language classroom (Degrave, 2019, p. 418).

Salcedo (2002) also investigated the effects of songs in a foreign language classroom.

Salcedo (2002) conducted a study with 94 native English-speaking adult students who had low proficiency in the Spanish language. The participants were enrolled in a beginner level of Spanish classes at a university in the United States. The students were divided into four groups: Two groups heard some text as songs, one group heard the same text as speech, and one group was the control group. Results demonstrated that text recall was better amongst the song group. They also showed that student participants enjoyed the Spanish classes with the addition of music to the curriculum (Salcedo, 2002). The inclusion of the songs in the second language classroom provided “students the opportunity to practice second language production through entertaining and culturally rich songs” (p. 9). Salcedo (2002) explains that by introducing songs in the teaching and learning of the Spanish language “may aid in the retention of texts, while producing a mental repetition that may stimulate language acquisition” (p. 9).

According to Salcedo (2002), previous studies suggest numerous benefits in using music in the foreign language classroom such as to lower anxiety and stress, increase motivation, improve speaking pronunciation, and enhance cultural awareness.

The results of Salcedo's (2002) study suggested that there was an increase of text recall for the music group, that neither of the groups showed difference in delayed text recall, and that there was a difference in the involuntary mental rehearsal when the material is taught with song rather than text. In conclusion, Salcedo (2002) showed that students benefitted from the inclusion of music and songs in the learning of Spanish language and that they demonstrated motivation and joy with the musical activities incorporated into the second language classroom.

I attempted to understand how children in early years in a bilingual environment learn musical concepts and piano skills in a second language that they have yet to master. In trying to understand this phenomenon, I identified, examined, and analyzed methodologies, techniques, approaches, and teaching practices that the music teacher used to facilitate this learning process. My research proposed to add to the field of bilingual music education by focusing on the students' music learning outcomes and considering their challenges and barriers.

As a researcher and bilingual music teacher I take into account several factors that influence the teaching and learning of music in bilingual classrooms such as the previous knowledge of students, their ways of learning, teacher and student creativity, social and musical contexts for learning, and ways a teacher makes meaningful connections in the music curriculum.

Harwood and Marsh (2012) point out that "music education is seen to benefit creative,

emotional, social, physical, and cognitive development in children and to contribute to children's engagement with school environments" (p. 319).

It is essential that music teachers understand and consider the many ways their students learn. For this, teaching approaches need to be rethought "as much as *what* repertoire we choose, and what musical experiences we choose to offer our students" (Harwood & Marsh, 2012, p. 322). Music teachers need to foster musical learning and creativity in a holistic way, extending what students already know and making them move beyond their current levels of knowledge. It is also appropriate to consider students' musical interests in the learning process, thus making learning holistic instead of analytical (Harwood & Marsh, 2012).

Music teachers must be mindful when planning musical experiences; learning and music-making are social processes. To achieve a successful level of music teaching, it is required that teachers be knowledgeable about music and students' learning processes. Teachers must also embrace a holistic approach to teach music, thus facilitating students' learning of music's elements (Wiggins & Espeland, 2012).

With this broader view of teaching and learning, music teachers can bring music closer to students' lives, enabling them to make connections with other academic subjects and interests (Barrett & Veblen, 2012). This approach leads to a more comprehensive curriculum and hence "meaningful interdisciplinary connections" (p. 362). The real substance of an interdisciplinary approach is to make deep and meaningful connections between arts/music and other subjects honoring both equally. Interdisciplinary strategies within different areas of studies need "to search for complementary parallels" (Barrett & Veblen, 2012, p. 369).

## **2.8 Summary**

To understand the phenomenon of the learning process of musical concepts and piano skills by immigrant children in a bilingual environment, I completed a review of the current literature in the fields of music education, second-language education (bilingualism), piano teaching and learning, Discovery pedagogy, children's cognitive development, psychology, interdisciplinary approaches, and early year's education.

The literature in the psychology and second language education fields (Milovanov & Tervaniemi, 2011; Moreno et al., 2015; Roden et al., 2012; Rukholm et al., 2018; Temmerman, 2000) revealed numerous benefits of music training in second language acquisition skills such as pitch processing (in both music and language), reading skills, phonological awareness, and improvements of verbal memory skills. Several studies reviewed by Salcedo (2002) suggest that there are advantages to learning music in the early years of childhood as it might help in the learning of both musical and language skills.

It is also evident that music brings benefits to students' well-being, both emotional and psychological (Busse et al., 2018; Fonseca & Gant, 2016; Glover & young, 1998, Ludke & Weinmann, 2012). Some factors that could affect students' willingness to communicate in foreign language classes are motivation, learning environment, and emotions (Fernandez-Garcia & Fonseca-Mora, 2019). The socioemotional factors associated with cognitive ones are equally important in the learning of a second language (Fernandez-Garcia & Fonseca-Mora, 2019).

Degrave (2019) details several reasons why the use of music might be beneficial for second language teaching and learning both for "linguistic skills as for more general aspects, such as motivation or attention" (p. 415). Some of the factors that could influence language learning

are anxiety, motivation, and learning styles, thus making music impactful on many of these factors (Degrave, 2019). People have different ways and paces of learning, and teachers should use variety of activities to meet each student's needs.

Likewise, the literature also reveals that music, when used in the classroom, has the power to reduce anxiety and stress levels in second language acquisition as well as to create a positive effect in social relationships, empathy, and cooperation among students. In previous studies reviewed by Degrave (2019), the literature shows that teachers demonstrate a positive feeling towards the use of music in second language teaching even though the "incorporation appears occasional" (Degrave, 2019, p. 412). They recognize the benefits of using music in the foreign language classroom in many aspects such as language acquisition and skills, motivational and cultural aspects, as well as the capacity that music can create a fun, relaxing, and enjoyable learning environment. Music can also promote a reduction in anxiety and stress levels while learning a second language (Degrave, 2019). Music enhances motivation in the classroom and the use of songs is related to the aspect of motivation as it uses "authentic texts and language of native speakers" (Degrave, 2019, p. 415).

Ludke and Weinmann (2012) point out that the field of education recognizes the power of music learning in motor, cognitive, socio-emotional, and kinesthetic development in children to provide context for cultural engagement. Attention skills, focus, and creativity are also enhanced by learning music.

Undoubtedly, music is widely portrayed in the literature as a powerful pedagogical tool to teach a second language to people of different ages: Children, teenagers, and adults. Music is present in everyday people's lives. It is used as an important means of communication,

especially amongst teenagers (Alinte, 2013). Therefore, songs are considered a great resource in the teaching and learning of a foreign language as they “constitute perfect texts which can be used for a great number of learning activities in the language classroom” (p. 10).

Overall, second language teachers are in favor of using songs in language classes. They “suggest that songs can be an effective tool for teaching grammar and by using songs in teaching practice the students could be motivated in their learning experiences” (Alinte, 2013, p. 24). Likewise, Fernandez-Garcia and Fonseca-Mora (2019) address that listening to music is considered one of most teenagers’ favourite activity and “highlight the emotional influence that music exerts on adolescent identity” (p. 125). The authors point out important factors that contribute to students developing speaking proficiency: Motivation, students’ interest, and their “ability of being emotionally competent (able to understand, monitor, and regulate their own emotions)” (p. 127). Accordingly, they conclude that in “developing English as a foreign language, learners’ emotional understanding can enhance learners’ willingness to communicate in the foreign language classroom, and therefore, their speaking proficiency” (p. 135).

Moreover, Degrave (2019) explains that there are three main methods related to the teaching of language with the use of music: “The use of music without lyrics (sounds or background music), the use of songs, and the use of rhythmical activities” (p. 412). Regarding sounds and background music, previous studies have shown an enhancement of performance during tasks “among others at the linguistic level” (Degrave, 2019, p. 413). It appears that music without lyrics can improve language skills (Degrave, 2019). The use of songs seems to be frequently used in foreign language classrooms mainly in teaching grammar skills, language



pronunciation, and vocabulary as well as in different ways such as to teach cultural aspects, contexts, or information/background about the singer (Degrave, 2019). Rhythmical activities are sometimes used in foreign language classrooms to teach, for example, rhythms of speech by clapping hands or using gestures to “illustrate the speech intonation” (Degrave, 2019, p. 413).

Degrave (2019) states that the use of music has potential benefits “such as vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, writing skills or phonetic acquisition” (Degrave, 2019, p. 415). The author points out that the teaching of vocabulary recall in second language classroom can be enhanced by using “music in the background, songs, and rhythmical activities” and that songs “help to easily remember vocabulary or phrases” (Degrave, 2019, p. 415). In previous studies, results demonstrated that the writing fluency, phonetic skills, and listening abilities were enhanced in students who heard sung versions of songs rather than spoken versions (Degrave, 2019).

Salcedo (2002) also examined the benefits of using music in the learning of a second language by English native-speaker students. The author points out that the teachers in the second language field use music in different ways: To teach culture, grammar, and songs are useful to “practice intonation and language structures” (p. 5). Songs are also a useful tool to teach culture as a story and “aspects of the target culture” (p. 6). Music elements such as melodies, pitches, rhythm, and phrases can activate meaning and comprehension of a second language (Salcedo, 2002).

Although the literature shows a great amount of research about the efficacy of the use of music in second language acquisition, Medina (2002) points out that if the teachers “fail to

combine music and pedagogy in the second language classroom, students may be not fully benefited from the potentially powerful effects which music can have upon language acquisition” (p. 6). Although songs are enjoyable, it is essential that teachers combine the teaching of songs with effective instructional practices (Medina, 2002). This way, the “effects of music will bring a large amount of second language acquisition” to the students (p. 6).

Interdisciplinary approaches are discussed in the literature of second language education and music fields as a powerful strategy to integrate arts into the language classroom providing meaningful learning experiences to students. However, there are concerns among scholars in relation to the types and definitions of integrated approaches and ways of integrating different disciplines in this approach. Overall, the literature shows that arts/music is used in the classroom as an excellent vehicle to teach a second language in a subservient position in relation to the other subject. Only a few of the studies reviewed in my literature show an intrinsic interest in both music and language as the learning outcomes.

Rodriguez-Bonces (2017) mentions that previous studies demonstrated that the integration of music and other arts in the language curriculum was successful as students improved their communication skills in their language class (Lowe, 2002). Likewise, results from Medina’s (2002, 2003) studies “showed that music facilitates information retention, takes students’ needs into consideration, activates prior knowledge, improves pronunciation through repetition, and provides examples of the language as used in real situations” (Rodriguez-Bonces, 2017, p. 206). According to Rodriguez-Bonces (2017), it is of a great benefit to incorporate music and drama into the second language class. Students develop meaningful learning in a fun and relaxing environment while using the foreign language.

Ludke and Weinmann (2012) highlight that, in an integrated approach between language and music, teachers should work with the students in the four musical areas of: Listening, making, representing, and discussing music to develop their musical skills. When these areas are integrated and taught holistically, it can promote musical awareness in both individuals and groups. The authors believe that “music education should include opportunities to talk about, listen to, create, respond to, and understand both our own and other’s music” (p. 8).

Children can develop listening skills, awareness of environment sounds, and understanding of musical concepts through listening activities and identifying these sounds through verbal or visual means (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012). Making music (performing, improvising, and composing) is also important as it is in listening. Ludke and Weinmann (2012) suggest teachers guide students’ learning and development of this skill by building on their previous musical experiences. Representing is an area of musical learning “that involves activities related to sounds and other sign systems, such as language, numbers, movement, and dance” (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012, p. 14). The authors argue that the use of different modes for learning such as gestures, words, or images, has the potential to enhance students’ musical learning to support each individual’s ways of learning. Children are very much responsive to multi-sensory stimuli, and they like to move and dance in the classroom. Music and movement also have the potential to “develop children’s motor coordination, and sequential memory” (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012, p. 15).

The authors believe that talking about music and reflecting on the musical activities performed in the classroom will “develop children’s critical thinking skills, increase musical vocabulary, and support their musical understanding” (Ludke & Weinmann, 2012, p. 16).

They strongly recommend that teachers foster discussions and analysis around different

kinds of music as well as “music from different times in history or from different countries” thus developing children’s “social, cultural, and historical understanding (p. 16).

### Chapter 3: Methodology

Qualitative methods of research are best applied to study human and social phenomena, and as such, align with my research design. Under the umbrella of qualitative methods of research, I have chosen the case study methodology to help me understand the phenomenon of teaching and learning processes of musical concepts in a bilingual educational environment.

During several years of teaching music to children in a bilingual elementary school, I observed that students had the ability to learn music in a second/foreign language despite not having mastered it. This phenomenon piqued my interest to undertake this research through a qualitative case study. There was no better topic to be chosen to conduct my research study than one that is related to my professional work and to myself as a bilingual music teacher (Merriam, 2019).

In bounding my case, I studied the phenomenon of teaching and learning musical concepts and piano skills in a second language. I considered as the unit of analysis a group of six immigrant children who were 5 to 9 years old. They spoke languages other than English. The music teacher was born in Canada and spoke only English. The study was conducted in a private music studio in Calgary, Canada. These students had music instruction in English as a second language.

By doing an in-depth study of this phenomenon in a real-life context through a bounded system, my research revealed interesting findings that could contribute to the knowledge base of Music Education. Merriam (1998) defines a qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit” (As cited in

Simons, 2009 p. 9). Case studies are “particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources” (Merriam, 1998, p. 16 as cited in Simons, 2009, p. 9). Therefore, case study as my choice of methodology for my research study was the best option. Considering myself an emergent researcher, I am convinced that “cases are important for researchers’ own learning processes in developing the skills needed to do good research” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 223).

Through the analysis of several techniques, methodologies, and approaches used to teach music concepts to children in bilingual educational environments, I detailed teaching practices for facilitating music-learning processes. This analysis was done through the lenses of a theoretical socio-constructivist and interpretivist framework, which resonate with my philosophical stance. I believe that “reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds” (Merriam 1998, p. 6 as cited in Yazan, 2015, p. 137).

In designing my research as well validating the data of my qualitative case study, I brought my socio-constructivist epistemological stance in the development of the research, which was very much aligned with Merriam’s (1998) point of view. She states that “qualitative study provides the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author’s conclusion makes sense” (p. 199, as cited in Yazan, 2015, p. 147). According to Stake (1995) “constructivism helps a case study researcher justify lots of narrative description in the final report” (p. 102).

### **3.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

Taking into account that an engaged and supportive teaching-learning environment can promote and scaffold student learning and considering that the teachers’ role in children’s

development and learning is as a “guide, mentor or facilitator” (Gallant, 2000, p. 74), I situate myself as a socio-constructivist researcher and educator, understanding that “individual learning processes are holistic and contextual, nurtured through interactions with others” (Wiggins & Espeland, 2012, p. 342).

As a music educator with a socio-constructivist worldview, and using this paradigm to make meaning of our experiences and how we come to know the world, I agree with Webster’s (2011) principles of constructivism in regards to the nature of knowledge when he states that, “Knowledge is formed as part of the learner’s active interaction with the world and that “Learning is in large part a social activity” (p. 36) (As cited in Shively, 2015, p. 129).

In designing my qualitative case study, I brought my epistemological socio-constructivist and interpretivist stances. According to Erickson (1986), “the most distinctive characteristic of qualitative inquiry is its emphasis on interpretation” (As cited in Stake, 1995, p. 8). I interpreted the lived experiences of the case in a real-life context to come to know it well and understand the phenomenon. For the purpose of my study, these stances constituted the theoretical lens that helped me make meaning of the participants’ lived experiences. I also acknowledge that my socio-constructivist and interpretivist worldview underpinned the process of my research approach, especially as it relates to issues of ethics, validity, generalizability, trustworthiness, and reliability.

In trying to understand the learning process of musical concepts and piano skills by students in bilingual environments, I considered the active role of the learner in their own learning experiences. Shively (2015) notes that “active engagement is vital to knowledge construction” (p. 129). Wiggins (2015) describes important guidelines about learners and

learning based on a constructivist paradigm and points out that “learners’ own ideas are central to the learning/teaching process” and that “learning experiences are contextual and holistic in nature” (p. 26) (As cited in Shively 2015, p.129).

Subscribing to a constructivist stance, I believe that “learning is an ongoing process” (Davis, 2004, p. 130 as cited in Shively 2015, p. 131) and as a music teacher we can provide meaningful and broad musical experiences for our students, enabling music to be part of their lives (Shively, 2015).

Through a socio-constructivist and interpretivist theoretical lens, I analyzed and interpreted the data of my qualitative case study research. I attempted to understand the phenomenon of learning musical concepts and piano skills in a bilingual environment by immigrant children who were in the ages between 5 to 9 years old as having been as my bounded case in this study.

### **3.2 Research Participants**

The participants of this research study were the Canadian music teacher and a group of six immigrant children between the ages of 5 to 9 years old. These participants attended music lessons in a private music studio in the city of Calgary, Canada. The music classes were taught in English. Because they were minors, parent/guardian consent was necessary to conduct this research at the site. After parents/guardians gave consent, students were asked to give assent to participate in this study. Assent forms were written in a language appropriate for this age range of students.

Information that participants gave in this study were handled confidentially. Participants’



personal identifying information was not collected in this study and their involvement was confidential. Participants' names were kept confidential as well the data they provided in the dissemination of the research findings.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

I used three methods for data collection: Class observations, semi-structured interviews with the music teacher and students, and analysis of documents such as students' books, resource materials provided by the music teacher, and the curriculum designed for this research study, which was drawn from the Music Program of Study from Alberta Education. The music teacher and the studio's owner granted me permission to share these documents in this thesis (see Appendix A and Appendix B).

I, the researcher, was a participant-observer during class observations. While students were having their music lessons at the studio, I watched the interactions between the students and teacher and took notes regarding the teaching and learning process that happened within the classroom.

These observations detailed activities such as the ways the music teacher delivered and conducted at class, interacted with students in the classroom during instruction time, and the ways students behaved and interacted with the music teacher during music class in relation to the learning of music content. Simons (2009) notes that through observations, researchers gain "a comprehensive 'picture' of the site, a 'sense of the setting' which cannot be obtained solely by speaking with people" (p. 14). Students could choose not to be included in the observational component of the study during music lessons since

participation was voluntary. However, this situation did not happen in this study as all the parents gave consent and students agreed to be included in this observational component.

Classroom observations were done with each student for a period of 2 months. In this study, there were a total of 8 music lessons that were delivered individually to each student for 30 minutes once a week.

The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions. I interviewed the students and the music teacher to seek answers to the research questions regarding the learning and teaching process of musical concepts and piano skills by these participants (students and teacher). The teacher and student participants were interviewed only once during the research study. The interviews took place within the music studio and outside of the music lessons in order not to disrupt the normal routines of the students and teacher. I also established an effective and essential relationship with research participants for the purpose of the study and for the generation of in-depth data. Simons (2009) notes that it is important to “establish rapport directly in relation to the purpose of the study through a brief explanation of the research, clarity of purpose and procedures, openness and presence” (p. 5).

The teacher’s interview included semi-structured questions such as:

- “Can you give me an example of activities that you usually do with your students in music lessons?”
- “What do you do if you perceive that a student does not understand the proposed activity due to not having mastered the second language?”
- “Are there any resources that you use to help you in planning and facilitating

learning experiences for these students within a bilingual environment and that support students to achieve the outcomes of the curriculum?” “What are they?”

The student’s interviews followed a set of semi-structured questions such as:

- “What did you like the most in the music lesson?”
- “Do you like having music lessons in a second language? Why?”
- “What does the teacher do that best helps you learn music in English?”

Individual interviews with the researcher were audio-recorded and transcribed to facilitate further analyses. The student interviews were approximately 15 minutes in length for each individual, and the teacher’s interview was approximately 45 minutes in length.

Documents, such as students’ books, resource materials provided by the music teacher, and the curriculum designed for this study that was drawn from the Music Program of Study from Alberta Education, were analyzed “to portray and enrich the context and contribute to an analysis of issues” (Simons, 2009, p. 23). Simons (2009) also points out that “document analysis is often a helpful precursor to observing and interviewing, to suggest issues it may be useful to explore in the case and to provide a context for interpretation of interview and observational data” (p. 23). The analysis of these documents gave me the opportunity to know more about the music content, objectives of the music lessons, and the methodologies used by the music teacher to deliver the music lessons. It is important to note that personal information in these records such as the name of the music studio, and name of the teacher were kept confidential and anonymous in the dissemination of the study’s findings.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

All the data gathered (notes from lesson' observations, audio-recorded and transcribed interviews of research participants, and information contained in documents) were analyzed and interpreted to make meaning of the data for writing and reporting the findings of the study.

Merriam (2009) notes that “data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity in qualitative research” (p. 165). Therefore, I attempted to analyze the data collected during fieldwork reporting the findings in a rich and thick description to “provide the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author’s conclusion ‘makes sense’” (Firestone, 1987, p.19 as cited in Merriam 2009, p. 166). This analysis was done and carried on as “an ongoing activity” (Merriam, 1988, p. 123), while collecting data in the research site. Stake (1995) contends that “analysis should not be seen as separate from everlasting efforts to make sense of things” (p. 72).

From classroom observations I took notes of activities that happened in the music classroom. I also took notes after each participant’s interview. These notes reflected some thoughts and key ideas from both researcher and participants. By comparing data from lesson observations, interviews, documents, and my personal notes, I drew out themes in search for regularities and patterns that then were transformed into categories. Merriam (1988) notes that “developing categories, typologies or themes involves looking for recurring regularities in the data” (p. 133).

Merriam’s “model of qualitative data analysis for case study” (Yazan, 2015, p. 145) resonates with me, as does her process of making meaning of data, which “involves

consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read” (Merriam, 1998, p. 178 as cited in Yazan, 2015, p. 145). As my epistemological stance aligns with Merriam’s, I believe that “consolidation, reduction and interpretation help the clear and concrete application of constructivism in analytic process more than impression and intuition” (Yazan, 2015, p. 145).

### **3.5 Data’s Validity, Reliability and Generalizability**

Regarding the validity and reliability of my data, I drew these concepts in my case study research from my socio-constructivist worldview aligned with Merriam’s epistemic commitments along with Stake’s rendition of triangulation. Yazan (2015) points out that “Merriam presents a much more comprehensive approach to qualitative understanding of data validation” (p. 147). Therefore, to enhance validity of data in my case study research I used “triangulation, member checks, and disclosure of researcher bias” (Yazan, 2015, p. 150). To ensure the reliability of my study I performed an “explanation of investigator’s position with regards to the study and triangulation” (Yazan, 2015, p. 150). The use of thick description in the presentation of the findings enhanced the external validity of my data.

Validation of data was one of the many aspects that I was attentive to during the collection and analysis phases. In qualitative case study research, there are multiple views of case depending on the philosophical stance or worldview taken by the investigators and hence it is impossible to reach for a consensus in the interpretation of the case (Stake, 1995).

Nonetheless, I had “ethical obligations to minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding” (Stake, 1995, p. 109) in the interpretation of my case’s phenomenon.

Therefore, I looked for additional observations in the data's interpretation to enhance its validity (Stake, 1995).

By using triangulation for data and analysis in my case study, I could "increase credence in the interpretation and demonstrate commonality of assertion" (Stake, 1995, p. 112). In this process of triangulation of data, I used a member check procedure: "checking interpretations with individuals interviewed and observed" (Merriam, 1988, p. 183).

Merriam (1988) contends that "involving participants in all phases of the research and clarifying researcher biases and assumptions" (p. 183) are parts of the triangulation process.

To enhance reliability in my case study research I wrote a detailed explanation about the process of the study, how the findings emerged after data interpretation, a description of the assumptions and bias that I may have brought to the research, alongside with the process of triangulation (Merriam, 1988).

In this research I also attempted to generalize the findings of my study. I believe that the findings that emerge from a case study can be transferable to other contexts, allowing readers to discern the aspects of the case study they may use or not (Simons, 2009).

In reporting the findings of my research in a rich and descriptive account, I attempted to help readers to generalize to their own contexts; hence, the importance of naturalistic generalization, which resonates with the reader's experience (Stake, 1995).

It was my aspiration that in writing a rich and thick description of the findings in my case study I may have achieved a naturalistic generalization of the findings and "generate over-

arching concepts from the case” (Simons, 2009, p. 5). Case study research is dependent on contexts, has closeness to “real life situations” and depicts “multiple details” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 223). I believe that through a case study, I may have achieved a generalization of the findings that can be applicable to the reader’s own context.

### **3.6 Research Ethical Considerations**

To conduct research, especially if it involves humans, it requires that the researcher be mindful of ethical issues. While I was designing my qualitative case study, I was cognizant about ethical issues that I, as a researcher, could face in the process of data collection, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of the findings.

All the data gathered were analyzed and interpreted by the researcher to make meaning of these data. Individual interviews were audio recorded to facilitate further analysis. The audio-recorded interview files were protected through encryption and password management on a dedicated storage medium. The audio of the interviews was accessed and analyzed solely by the researcher and were not shown in public. There are no names in the interviews. Solely the researcher and her supervisor had access to all the information collected through this research study.

The information that participants gave in this study were handled confidentially. Participants’ data were anonymous, which means that their names were not collected or linked to the data in the dissemination of the research findings. No personal identifying information was collected in this study. Participation was completely voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. Participants were free to discontinue participation at any

time during the study.

The documents that were requested for analysis that contained personal information such as the name of the music studio, and name of teacher were kept confidential and anonymous in the dissemination of the study's findings. For security reasons, the documents, when in the researcher's possession, were kept in a locked cabinet throughout the study. All the information collected in this study was stored in the researcher's personal computer, which requires a password that only the researcher has access to.

The establishment of trust between the researcher and participants was an important step that I achieved during my research process. Simons (2009) states that "trust is essential to good field relations, but it cannot be assumed; it has to be created in the process of conducting the research" (p. 6). To create this trustworthiness in the field with the people I was studying, I was mindful in many aspects. Such aspects were in relation to respecting participants' privacy and the confidentiality of their information, accuracy in how I recorded their perspectives, and awareness of my biases to limit my influence on data interpretation (Simons, 2009).

As a researcher who conducted a qualitative case study, I also took a process of reflexivity during the whole process of the research design. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) suggest that reflexivity is an "ongoing process" (p. 274), and lasts throughout the entire research study. It is an ethical practice that must be adopted by the researcher.

### **3.7 Limitations and Delimitations of my Qualitative Case Study Research and Summary**



One important limitation that I acknowledge that may have had arisen in my qualitative case study is the issue of assumptions and bias in relation to data collection, analysis, and interpretation. My previous professional practice as a music teacher in bilingual elementary school could have influenced my assumptions during this research phase. I was cognizant and reflective throughout the research process to mitigate this limitation and to maintain the integrity of this research. Merriam (2009) states that “both the readers of case studies and the authors themselves need to be aware of biases that can affect the final product” (p. 52). In the process of data management (collection, analysis, and interpretation), I was sensitive, responsible, and aware of my previous knowledge and teaching experience in this specific context (bilingual classroom), which should not have interfered in the analysis and interpretation of data and hence in the final report. As stated before, I have explained in the report my position with regards to the study and employed the method of triangulation to validate the data. Reflexivity was also employed throughout the research process.

A second limitation of my research is that the study focused on a group of immigrant children in the age range between 5 to 9 years old who were living in Canada for less than two years and thus, their level of English proficiency was limited. These children had not yet mastered the second language and that could have been an obstacle for learning music in English. The findings that emerged from this research may not be applicable for students who have a good level of English proficiency.

A third limitation that I acknowledge is with regard to the parents’ perspectives in relation to their children’s musical learning during this study and their piano practice at home. The

parents had a limited role in this study as they could not actively participate in their children's weekly music lessons within the classroom. Practice at home was recommended by the teacher, however, this aspect of learning was not included in my study.

I also acknowledge that my research was restricted solely to the music classroom with these immigrant students. The relationship between the music teacher and students, their teaching and learning process within the classroom, was observed while issues of the music studio's policy and its overall methodology were not taken into account for analysis purposes in this research. The case under study was delimited to the music classroom only.

In this case study, music lessons were delivered in English as a second language. Thus, the language for instruction within the music classroom, repertoire, and the curriculum, were especially designed for this study and could be considered as a factor of delimitation.

Lastly, I conclude that, by using case study as a methodology to my research, I was able to "demonstrate the influence of key actors and interactions between them... and explain how and why things happened" (Simons, 2009, p. 12). According to Simons (2009) "case study has the potential to engage participants in the research process" (p. 12) and as a researcher who brought my socio-constructivist and interpretivist stances as the lenses in the conduction of the research, I felt very confident in using this methodology which "...recognizes the importance of co-constructing perceived reality through the relationships and joint understandings we create in the field" (Simons, 2009, p. 12).

## **Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis**

As described in chapter three, I have chosen case study methodology to help me understand the phenomenon of teaching and learning processes of music concepts in a bilingual educational environment.

Data collection and analyses were performed during the period from December 2020 to February 2021. I used three methods for data collection: Lesson observations, semi-structured interviews with the music teacher and students, and analysis of curriculum documents, which were designed specifically to be used in this research study.

In this chapter, all the findings and analysis are presented in sections by data type: Lesson observations integrated with curriculum analysis, and a section with the interview analysis. The interviews were analyzed thematically. Following, I performed a cross-analysis with the recurrent findings of the data, which is reported in themes. My data interpretation is written in a detailed manner to offer the reader as much detail and information as possible about the research setting, participants, teaching and learning processes, and curriculum contents and outcomes.

I begin the chapter by describing my analyses from the lesson observations in a chronological approach with the analyses of the curriculum documents. The curriculum analysis was performed by outlining the music concepts and piano skills covered during the research lessons and specifying these contents taught by the teacher from Lesson 1 to Lesson 8. Thereby, the reader could have a better understanding of what the teacher taught in each lesson and how students responded to each. We had a total of 8 research lessons. They were facilitated once a week with a duration of 30 minutes for each student. I also present Table 1, which contains

demographic information about each student participant.

**Table 1**

*Students' Basic Demographic Information*

	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F
Age	5	7	8	6	9	5
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female
Nationality	Chinese	Chinese	Russian	Indian	Russian	Chinese
Language	Mandarin	Mandarin	Russian	Hindi/English	Russian	Mandarin

*Note.* Home Language.

#### **4.1 Research Group – Characteristics**

The research group consisted of six students and their ages varied from 5 to 9 years old. All the students were children from immigrant families who spoke other languages than English at home. Their nationalities are described in Table 1. Overall, they had a limited comprehension of English language. Students A and D had a better level of English comprehension than the rest of the students in the group. Students C and E had a basic level. For example, they could answer simple teacher's questions and greetings such as: "How are you today?" "What is your name?" "Do you like music?" On the other hand, they were not able to carry on long conversations in English with the teacher. Student C had been in Calgary, Canada for less than a year and her level of comprehension was low. The limitation in her English comprehension was noticeable in several situations during lesson observations. For instance, when the teacher

gave her some verbal instructions on how to perform an activity, Student C usually used body gestures (raising shoulders, opening arms and hands), and facial expressions as a way to demonstrate that she was not understanding teacher's instructions and language.

The students in this research group did not have previous music instruction in English with the exception of Student A who had previous experience with piano lessons and had basic knowledge of some musical concepts such as notes value (quarter notes, half notes, and whole notes).

The music teacher was a volunteer in this research study. He was born in Canada and did not speak any languages other than English. The music teacher was experienced in both private and group music lessons and used to teach young students in similar ages of the research students.

Thirty-minute music lessons were facilitated once a week for each student. During each lesson the teacher worked with students on several music concepts by singing songs, moving through action, teaching solfege starting with Mi – Sol and later La with hand signs, and teaching the introduction to piano studies. Students also had weekly homework assigned by the teacher: drawing, writing in their activities pages, and practicing their piano lesson at home.

#### **4.2 Music Concepts, Piano Skills, and Lesson Observations**

The music concepts covered in this study's curriculum were drawn from the Music Program of Study from Alberta Education. The design of the research curriculum incorporated music concepts taught in Grades One and Two within the public school system in Alberta, Canada. Several of these major concepts for elementary music were taught to student participants during research lessons. The key music concepts covered and taught to students during

research lessons were:

- Steady beat/rhythm – Long and short sounds
- High and low sounds – (vocal/solfege, and on piano)
- Tempos - Fast and slow
- Dynamics – *f* and *p* (Loud and soft)
- Pitches – Stepping and skipping
- Music alphabet – Going up and down (singing and on piano)

The piano concepts were incorporated into the curriculum as an introduction to piano studies for beginner students. The piano skills taught to students are described below:

- Sitting position and hand position
- Groups of 2's and 3's black keys
- Identification of quarter notes and half notes (“Ta” and “Ta-oo”)
- Finger numbers (Using also the Spider Fingers template)
- High and low pitches: Treble and Bass clefs
- Stepping and skipping pitches/keys
- The music alphabet on the piano (Using mini animals on the keys)

This curriculum used for the lessons was designed for children between the ages of 5 and 9 years old. Every music concept addressed in the curriculum was supported by play based

activities (music and movement, singing) and extra resources such as Duplo blocks, small heart-shaped toys with the music alphabet printed on them, mini toy animals, percussion instruments, cards (for rhythm, hands differentiation, finger numbers, high and low pitches), visual pictures on walls (Kodaly hand signs), floor keyboard (for stepping/skipping notes and high and low pitches using body movements), audio songs, and a digital piano for learning and practicing piano skills.

#### **4.2.1 Lessons 1 and 2 Plans**

**a) Curriculum Contents.** The music concepts and piano skills were taught to students with a progressive level of difficulty. The students started to understand what a beat is by tapping their hands on their legs. Together with the teacher, they tried to keep a steady beat while tapping on their legs. Then, they walked around the classroom. Along with the embodiment of this beat concept, the curriculum presents the terminology for the beat: the word “Ta” (for one beat) and soon after, the visual picture (symbol) for “Ta”: The quarter note symbol. In the first lesson, students learned about high and low sounds (vocal/solfege, and on piano) and they experienced fast and slow tempos by dancing and singing with the help of audio songs and by playing different percussion instruments (such as hand drums and rhythm sticks). In the piano skills part of the lesson, they learned the difference between right and left hands by following the direction of the quarter note stems (up stems for right hand and down stems for left hand). Students also identified the groups of 2’s and 3’s black keys on the piano and reproduced the “Ta” beat on the black keys. Sitting position and hand positions were also taught to students during this first lesson. The high and low sounds concept on the piano was taught to them by using right and left hands for high and low sounds, respectively.

In the second lesson, the teacher introduced the concept of half notes. The curriculum

suggested the use of the word “Ta-oo” for half notes as they get two beats. In helping students to understand the long sound/duration of the half notes versus quarter notes, the lesson plan suggested that the teacher chant to students “Ta-oo, 1, 2. Ta-oo gets 2” while clapping hands on the first beat (ta) and holding it together for the second pulse (oo). In the same way as the quarter note was presented, the curriculum also presented the visual symbol for “Ta-oo”: The half note symbol, after students experienced the duration of it by clapping hands and walking on “Ta-oo’s.” In lessons, students were able to clap and walk on two different beats: “Ta” for quarter notes (one beat) and “Ta-oo” for half notes (two beats). The teacher let students walk around the classroom on these two different beats while they were saying “Ta” or “Ta-oo.” The students walked and repeated “Ta-oo” for each step. While they were taking one step for “Ta-oo’s,” the students could recognize that the “Ta-oo” was slower than “Ta” steps. During this activity, the teacher kept switching between “Ta’s” and “Ta-oo’s” and the students were also able to change their walking.

In this lesson, the teacher also introduced the Kodaly hand signs sol and mi for singing and identifying high and low sounds. The music content in the curriculum was presented in a visual way. Students could “build” their student book every week as the teacher was giving them the pages containing the lesson content to be added in their binders. In this way, the students were able to see pictures of all the music content they learned during the research lessons and remember them (see Appendix B). The Kodaly hand signs pictures were printed in pages 7 and 15 of the curriculum (see Appendix B, pp. 215 and 223) and the students could identify and match pictures of it on the classroom’s wall with the pictures in their binders.

With regard to the concept of high and low pitches, the visual feature of the curriculum helped students to learn and differentiate between two pitches. For example, the song “Star Light, Star



Bright” (p. 3 of student book, see Appendix B, p. 211) contained not only the words of the song, but also the pictures of the stars. Some stars are drawn higher for high pitches and some stars are drawn lower for low pitches. By seeing the pictures of the stars in this song, students were able to move their hands while singing sol and mi pitches.

For long and short sounds (rhythm), the curriculum used shapes of hearts: One heart for quarter notes (1 beat) and two hearts attached for half notes (2 beats). Students could clap the rhythms of songs (“Tony Chestnut” “Jingle Bells” “Bounce High”) by following the pictures of the hearts. Students did not need to read standard rhythm notation to clap the song’s rhythm.

In addition, they were also able to sing the sol to mi interval by looking at the hand sign pictures on their pages (pp. 7, 15, and 23 of the student book, see Appendix B, pp. 215, 223, 231). In piano skills, Students learned to locate the finger numbers in their hands. Once again, the curriculum provided pictures of printed hands so that the students could see and write the finger numbers (pp. 8 and 10 of the student book, see Appendix B, pp. 216 and 218). Different resources were used by the teacher to help the students with hand positions. For example, for proper curved hand positions, the teacher gave each student a paper (kept in their binders) that had two spiders drawn on it (on the left and right sides). Each spider had numbers in circles from 1 to 5 where students could place their hands and fingers in each number. This Spider Finger Visual<sup>1</sup> (p. 29 of student book, see Appendix B, p. 237) activity paper was a helpful resource for students to place their hands and fingers in the proper positions. Typically, the teacher and students sat on the floor with their spider papers and the students curved their hands and fingers in the spiders. With the students’ eyes closed, the teacher asked them to

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<sup>1</sup>Original Spider Finger visual. It originates with a fellow teacher in Surrey BC who creates group music class games and visuals-Solo Time Music Games.

move certain fingers in the spiders. This was a helpful exercise for students to practice hand positions, and at the same time, practice their mental ability to recognize right and left hands as well as finger numbers. The “Spider Fingers” page was also included in the students’ books for practice and reference.

The teacher introduced the concept of double bar lines in this lesson, which was represented by a “stop sign” in the curriculum (“Taking Turns,” p. 9 of the student book, see Appendix B, p. 217). This was a good way to make students learn the meaning and function of the double bar lines. In Lesson 2, students played the “taking turns” short melodies using fingers 2 and 3, switching between right and left hands using the two black keys (on the middle) of the piano. By looking at the “stop signs” at the end of each melody, they learned that it was time to stop playing that line and move to the next, switching to the hand recommended in the activity (p. 9 of the student book, see Appendix B, p. 217).

**b) Lessons Observations: How Students Responded to Lessons 1 and 2.** The first lesson with Student A was very productive. He showed interest, curiosity about things that were in the music classroom (charts and pictures hanging on the wall, percussion instruments, the piano itself, etc.) and was willing to follow the teacher’s instructions. It seemed that this new learning environment somewhat triggered his curiosity and motivation to take his first music lesson in this research study. There is also another component, which is meeting the new music teacher. The student never had music lessons with the research teacher, and had not met him before. Both the student and teacher were excited to meet. The student was able to follow the teacher’s instructions and to actively participate in 30-minute-long music lessons.

Throughout all the music lessons, it was interesting to see and hear the students’ insights

related to the musical contents taught during lessons. The teacher explained the difference between low and high sounds on the piano. In one of my observations, Student D said out loud: “The sound of this lonely black key on the piano sounds to me very dark” (observation notes – Lesson 1) as he was referring to the very low A (la) note key on the piano. The student associated the low sound of a piano key with a “dark” colour.

In Lessons 1 and 2, the teacher taught about quarter notes (their beat), the groups of two and three black keys, and finger numbers for piano studies. In the following lesson a week later, the teacher asked Student D to find the group of two black keys and to play with fingers 2 and 3. Student D figured out which key has a high sound and which key has a low sound. While reading the exercise in his book, where he had a sequence of quarter notes alternating between fingers 2 and 3, Student D said: “Oh! These ones (notes) are on the same level, so I should play the same key with the same finger” (observation notes – Lesson 2). These “thinking out loud” moments from some students served as evidence that learning was occurring. In the case of Student D, he recognized that some notes repeated, as they were written on the same level and without finger directions (p. 9 of the student book, Appendix B, p. 217). The children in this research group were fast learners and had a willingness to learn new content. In most cases in the second lesson of the study, these children demonstrated that they had learned something from the previous lesson as we can see in this excerpt from a lesson observation: “Student D remembers the solfege Sol-Mi using the hands signs. The teacher starts to sing the song “Star light, star bright” doing the hand signs as they sang in the first lesson. Student D says: “I remember this song. I can do it”! Then, he starts to sing the song on his own” (Observation notes – Lesson 2).

The students’ creativity was also evident during research Lessons 1 and 2. By their creativity I

could recognize that learning was occurring during the music lessons. Some of the students used their creativity to extend some of the teacher's activities. In Lesson 1 where some of the contents were about the note's stems (if up or down, for right and left hands), I observed: "Student D suggests different combinations with the rhythm cards (quarter note and half note): Putting them upside or downside making changes on what hands to tap (right or left, depending on the stems of the notes). The teacher and student apply this same activity now walking around the classroom on the rhythm cards. Depending on the stems again, they use different feet for walking, or hopping" (right or left foot) (Observation notes – Lesson 2). Student B also suggested variation/combination using the rhythm cards when marching around the room in Lesson 2.

In this research group, Student C was the one who had a very limited understanding of the English language because her family had recently immigrated to Canada. For me as the researcher to observe the music lessons with this student was very interesting as I could see that even though the English Language was an obstacle for Student C to learn music concepts, she could find different ways to demonstrate to the teacher that she had learned the music content. The use of gestures by the teacher also helped students to understand what he was trying to explain during lessons, which I noted: "The teacher explains about hands' round shape position for the piano. He tries to explain associating with the words "circle" or "glasses" putting his hands curved around his eyes. This shows to Student C how round shapes look like" (Observation notes – Lesson 1). Student C easily could understand how to properly position her hands on the piano keys by looking at the teacher's gestures. Language was not a hindrance for her to understand the words "round shapes" as she could associate it with the teacher's gesture of putting his hands curved around his eyes like eyeglasses.

On the other hand, from the student's perspective, it was also interesting to see a student's demonstration of their learning and understanding of the teacher's instructions during these lessons. Using creativity and different ways to overcome difficulties in understanding instructions in a foreign language, students were able to demonstrate their learning in their own ways. A good example of this happened in Lesson 1 in which the teacher was teaching about right and left hands. Student C and the teacher sat on the floor doing a written activity in the student's book. The paper activity had many drawings/pictures of small hands that required the student to label right hand with letter "R" and left hand with letter "L" (p. 5 of the student book, Appendix B, p. 213).

The teacher read aloud the activity instructions before the student could start it. Student C did not understand the teacher's instructions because of the language spoken. She stopped for a moment and made a facial expression to communicate that she did not understand what the teacher was telling her to do. Nevertheless, she decided to use another way to show her learning: She made circles around the pictures of the right hands using the colour blue and for the left hands she circled using the colour red. The activity was completed correctly by the student, demonstrating her learning of the concepts. The only difference was that she responded in a different way than requested and explained by the teacher.

In my analysis, the student grasped the lesson contents taught by the teacher despite her limited proficiency with the English language, and she demonstrated her learning with creativity in a way that was more convenient, useful, and easier for her.

Through music and movement, the teacher and the students moved in the classroom while listening to music, playing percussion instruments, or singing. The students embodied many different music concepts. One of the strategies used by the teacher to teach high and low

sounds was the movement of standing up or down to represent these sounds.

One factor that caught my attention during the lessons observations was the students' attention spans and behaviours. Depending on a student's attention span, the teacher had to change his strategy during lessons. Within the research group, Student F was very shy, and had difficulty concentrating and focusing during lessons. When the teacher recognized a student's difficulty concentrating, he changed his seating position and proximity to that student during instruction. Typically, the teacher sat on the floor beside students while teaching. With students with attention deficits, such as Student F, the teacher sat in front of the student so that he could get better attention from the student and keep them focused during that time of instruction.

Students A, B, and F were very distracted, sometimes demonstrating a lack of focus or motivation, or hyperactivity in behaviour, which made it harder for them to follow instructions. In these cases, the teacher had to slow down the delivery of the curriculum and find alternative ways and activities to maintain each student's focus and motivation. The students with attention issues wanted the lessons to be more fun and playful. The instruments in the classroom, pictures on the walls, and other objects in the room, such as the blue board for the rhythm sequences, and materials kept on the teacher's table, were distractions for students.

When the teacher recognized that those distractions were impeding learning, he quickly came up with idea and invited students to play a game called "racing to the piano," which fosters movement, action, quick thinking, friendly competition, learning, and a fun atmosphere. The teacher introduced the game to the students as a way to keep them engaged, active, and motivated during classes. Overall, the students were very curious and interested in the piano that was in the classroom and the teacher found that the racing game was a fun way to integrate

learning. This was noted in my observation as follows: “Student F is curious to play on the piano and she grasps the concept of the high and low sounds. However, the student has difficulty finding groups of two and three black keys on the piano. The teacher realized this and suggested the racing game again” (Observation notes – Lesson 1). Using this kind of game, the teacher incorporated lesson content and reinforced the students’ learning of the concept of two and three black keys on the piano while the students had lots of fun playing it.

In Lessons 1 and 2, the students demonstrated much creativity, curiosity, and willingness to learn. Students’ general curiosity about various topics such as songs, instruments, and the learning environment, was noticeable from the first day of research lessons as I recorded in my notes: “Student B is very curious about the piano. He wanted to go to the instrument right away at the beginning of the lesson (Observation note – Lesson 1). These students’ characteristics (creative, curious, willing to learn) had a huge influence in the learning process, as they extended and facilitated the students’ construction of knowledge. The process of teaching and learning became more fluid.

**c) Students’ Learning Outcomes After Lessons 1 and 2.** In summary, at the end of Lessons 1 and 2, the students were able to:

- Recognize and demonstrate Ta and Ta-oo’s beats – Long and short sounds (when singing, clapping, on rhythm instruments, and on piano);
- Recognize high/low (vocal/solfege and on piano) and identify by use of Kodaly hand signs (sol/mi) and the use of right hand for high and left hand for low on piano;
- Identify Ta and Ta-oo’s symbols with stem up for right hand and stem down for left hand, and demonstrate understanding when reading them;

- Identify groups of 2 and 3 black keys on the piano and play them with proper posture and hand position;
- Experience fast and slow tempos and keep a steady beat at various tempos;
- Identify fingers by number (with thumb as 1) and use them individually;
- Sing names of Kodaly hand signs sol/mi for high/low when reading the “Star Light, Star Bright” song chart.

#### ***4.2.2 Lessons 3 and 4 Plans***

**a) Curriculum Content.** The teacher always started his music lessons with a quick review of the content and songs learned in previous lessons. In Lesson 3, the teacher introduced the song “Jingle Bells” to students. As in previous lessons, the curriculum presented this new song in the same way as the songs learned before: The words “Ta” and “Ta-oo’s” for the song’s rhythm were printed inside of the heart-shaped pictures – One heart for 1 beat (Ta) and two hearts attached for two beats (Ta-oo). This visual feature of presenting the rhythm facilitated those students to accurately clap the rhythm of the song without knowing the melody of it. The curriculum suggested that the teacher and students read the rhythm first (Ta, and Ta-oo) while clapping hands for them to read the words. For this song, there were suggestions for also playing the rhythm by using bells (wrist bells), then switching for playing the beat, and in different tempos – Fast and slow (p. 11 of the student book, see Appendix B, p. 219).

There was lots of music and movement in Lesson 3, as usual, including dancing and singing previous songs learned in Lessons 1 and 2. The song “Tony Chestnut” that students learned in



Lesson 2 (only the rhythm) was sung in Lesson 3, now with melody (sol – mi) and actions for the song (Daily plan #3, see Appendix A, p. 197). The curriculum also suggested a song called “The Rhythm and the Beat” as an extra resource for reinforcing the concepts of beat and rhythm while students move and dance along with the audio recording of the song.

The concepts of high and low pitches were reinforced during the piano skills time. In Lesson 3, students learned that the high sounds are found in the higher keys (right side of the piano) and low sounds in the lower keys (left side of the piano) (p. 11 of the student book, see Appendix B, p. 219). The previous concepts learned in Lessons 1 and 2 (hand positions, finger numbers, short and long sounds, double bar lines, groups of two black keys) were also reviewed in Lesson 3. Following the curriculum, the teacher introduced the groups of three black keys. By Lesson 3, students were able to play short melodies and the refrain of the song “Jingle Bells” on both groups of two and three black keys using fingers 1 (as the thumb), 2, 3, and 4. The teacher reviewed the “stop sign” pictures for the melodies and “Jingle Bells” song, as well the stem direction for each hand (up stem for right hand, down stem for left hand) (pp. 12 and 13 of the student book, see Appendix B, pp. 220-221). For each melody and song taught to students, the curriculum presented a picture of the keyboard printed on the page, so students could reference their keys on the piano as well hands and finger positions.

In Lesson 4, the teacher introduced the A pitch (la) and its hand sign. The curriculum suggested the song “See Saw” (p. 15 of the student book, see Appendix B, p. 223) with the addition of the “la” note and hand sign. Using the visual feature, the song was represented by pictures of two kids playing on a see saw toy drawn inside of a chart. If the pitch was high, the picture was drawn in a high place, and if the pitch was low, the picture was drawn in a low place. For the new pitch, “la,” the picture was slightly higher than the sol pitch in the song

chart. Also, a new Kodaly hand sign picture for “la” was hung on the classroom wall so students could identify and reproduce it by moving their hands copying the picture on the wall.

In addition to teaching students the new pitch by singing the solfege names, using the hand signs, and then singing the song with the words, the “See Saw” song also promoted some movements that students could do in partnership with the teacher. The curriculum suggested that the teacher and students sit on the floor together holding hands and “see saw” by swaying their bodies back and forth at various tempos. It also suggested movements for gross motor skills such as standing up (for sol), squatting (for mi), and tiptoeing (for la), according to the pitch sung during the song.

The music alphabet was introduced during Lesson 4. Following the curriculum’s directions, the teacher introduced the seven letters of the music alphabet to the students and together they sang to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.” They sang the seven letters to the melody forwards and backwards at various tempos. The idea of singing to this tune facilitated students memorizing and learning the alphabet in both directions as this tune was very familiar to most of the children.

In piano skills, the teacher and students reviewed the contents learned in previous lessons. The new concept presented in the curriculum was the introduction of the symbols for high and low pitches: Treble clef and Bass clef respectively (p. 15 of the student book, see Appendix B, p. 223). In Lesson 4, the students could relate the treble clef to high pitches as well as a symbol for playing with the right hand. In the meantime, they also made the connection that the bass clef is used to represent low pitches, which are played with the left hand.

The concept of “stepping pitches” was designed within the curriculum to be taught to students

during Lesson 4 in piano skills. The curriculum presented a small picture of a keyboard that contained the words “stepping up and stepping down” and respective arrows for these directions (right and left). Also depicted are the first two lines and spaces (with some notes in it) as a pre-reading of a traditional music notation on the staff (p. 16 of the student book, see Appendix B, p. 224). The students could recognize that the lines and spaces make the notes look like it is “stepping.” Sometimes “stepping up” and other times “stepping down.” The curriculum suggested that the teacher demonstrate what it means to move by steps, so the teacher took the students to a hallway where they could find stairs. The teacher went up on the stairs steps saying “stepping up” and then went down the stairs by saying “stepping down.” It was visible and at the same time “real” to students, helping them to understand how to move in steps, and later to apply this concept on the piano keys.

At the end of Lesson 4, the students were able to play two short songs on the piano: “Freeze” and “Bloom” (pp. 17-18 of the student book, see Appendix B, pp. 225-226) using both hands and applying the new concepts learned during this lesson: To play on the groups of two and three black keys using their right hands whenever they saw the Treble clef and using their left hands when they saw the Bass clef. They could also practice the skill of reading notes in these two songs as the notes appeared stepping up or down in the lines and spaces throughout the music. As always, pictures of small keyboards were printed on the music pages to facilitate students in locating the keys on the piano.

**b) Lessons Observations: How Students Responded to Lessons 3 and 4.** The teacher’s practice and weekly routine of reviewing the contents from the previous week’s lesson helped to ground and solidify students’ learning. At the time that the teacher was doing the review of content from Lessons 1 and 2, the students could demonstrate how much they had remembered

and learned. During Lesson 3, while sitting at the piano, I noted that Student A “said out loud that curved hand positions on piano was supposed to be in the ‘spider’ shape. He reminded the teacher” (Observation note – Lesson 3), demonstrating that he remembered the concept of proper hand positions on the piano learned from the previous week’s lesson. There were moments when some students gave suggestions to the teacher to extend activities that they were engaged in during a lesson. For example, in this excerpt from one of my notes during classroom observations: “Teacher teaches Ta’s (quarter notes, 1 beat) and Ta-oo’s (half notes, 2 beats) using sand blocks. Student A suggested tapping a whole note on the sand blocks, holding for 4 beats” (Observation note – Lesson 3). This demonstrates the student’s previous knowledge in music related to learning about whole note beats. Student A remembered this music concept he learned previously and brought it to the classroom, extending the initial activity and idea proposed by the teacher.

Most of the students, especially Students A, B, D, and E, were able to expand activities and ideas during music classes related to the lesson’s contents proposed by the teacher. Through these expanded ideas and insights that they demonstrated and proposed during lessons, I perceived that learning had occurred. The students also demonstrated creativity and learning through drawings/writings done in the activities pages.

Creativity was also evident in the classroom when the teacher introduced the music alphabet. It was challenging for all students to say the alphabet backwards. The teacher suggested that the students sing the alphabet to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” because it’s a tune that many children know, and it may help them to memorize the music alphabet. In Lesson 4, Student D suggested playing a game in which “the teacher and student throw a pen to each other saying at the same time the music alphabet backwards without letting the pen fall on the

floor” (Observation note – Lesson 4). This showed me that the children are open to learning and that they have a lot of creativity. Furthermore, it also demonstrated that play and games were a good and fun way for children to learn.

As a routine, the teacher always started the lessons greeting students by chanting and hand signing a short question. In general, most of the students answered the question in the same way; chanting (in English) and hand signing the response as I noted in some lesson observations: “Teacher receives Student B chanting ‘hello how are you’ in Sol-Mi. Student B responds accurately” (Observation notes – Lesson 3). Children also learned by copying the teacher’s actions even when they did not have problems understanding the teacher’s instructions in English: “Student B recognizes the finger numbers, right and left hands learned in Lessons 1 and 2. He understands teacher’s commands. He’s also able to chant Sol-Mi, not in a good pitch though, and recognizes the hand signs for each of these sounds” (Observation notes – Lesson 3). By looking at the teacher’s actions, “Student B can clap the beat and the rhythm, while listening to the audio recording – ‘The rhythm and the Beat song’ - and copy the teacher using hand and body movements” (Observation notes – Lesson 4).

Playful activities performed in “game mode” garnered a lot of attention from students. They liked to move during lessons, and they also liked to laugh. Competition in a game activity between the teacher and student triggered interest and involvement for students to actively participate in class. In the following excerpt from one of my lesson observations, I noticed the excitement that Student A had for playing the game of racing to the piano with the teacher: “Student A is very active and wants to play the racing game to piano with the teacher, trying to touch the two and three black keys on the low and high sounds. He has a couple of minutes of concentration for doing the lesson, but he wants to play around more than do the lesson”

(Observation notes – Lesson 3). Student attention spans are a factor that must be taken into consideration by the teacher during lessons. Some characteristics such as deficits of attention, hyperactivity, or even the factor of students being in the early ages (due to their stages of development, these early ages children have a limited attention span) need to be considered in the learning process. In one of my classroom observations, I noticed that attention span is essential for learning to occur: “After a couple of minutes on the piano, Student A could finally play the exercise. Then he wants to switch to another activity. He grabbed the sand blocks and started tapping some rhythms with it” (Observation notes – Lesson 3).

Students with deficits of attention and hyperactivity behaviours sometimes had difficulty following instructions and completing an activity during a music lesson. These types of behaviours were noted in Student F and Student A, respectively, both of whom were 5 years old. Neither had significant difficulties understanding the English language, but they struggled to focus on activities that required sitting down at the piano and playing two or three lines of a melody following the correct beats, finger numbers, hand directions, and groups of two and three black keys. Older children, such as Student C and Student E, did not have these issues.

Students A and F generally wanted to play around in the room during music lessons as I noted in one of my lesson observations: “Student F is in her third lesson but still being very resistant to take the lesson. She’s very distracted... running around the room, hiding behind the chair... when the teacher invites her for a game of racing to the piano, she agrees to participate... She can’t stop moving around the room, and refuses to follow the structured lesson” (Observation notes – Lesson 3).

At some times during lessons, when Students A and F were able to sit down at the piano and

play at an entire line of a melody following the correct instructions, the teacher always made compliments, and cheered on their achievements and focus at that time of instruction. In these few moments I perceived that these students had learned some of the music concepts and piano skills taught in previous lessons. For example, they could clap and recognize half note beats versus quarter notes. Or they could recognize the groups of two and three black keys on the piano. However, the demonstration of this learning had to be done with some coaching from the teacher. Despite Students A and F demonstrating some awareness of musical concepts learned during the first week of lessons, they did not want to learn more. During lessons, Student F rarely demonstrated creativity in activities proposed by the teacher (for example, by extending the teacher's activity) or demonstrated moments of insights differently from Student D for instance. However, Students A and F did not refuse to do an activity in the classroom proposed by the teacher. They were always willing to learn and to do the activities notwithstanding of the way they like to learn: Moving around the classroom or playing games.

**c) Students' Learning Outcomes After Lessons 3 and 4.** The students learned several new music concepts and piano skills at the end of Lessons 3 and 4. They were able to:

- Recognize the difference between beat and rhythm
- Identify high and low pitches (Voice/solfege and on piano)
- Identify the "la" by using the Kodaly hand sign
- Recognize that "la" is higher (one step higher) than "sol"
- Sing the seven letters of the music alphabet forwards and backwards
- Recognize the treble clef for high pitches/right hand and bass clef for low pitches/left

hand

- Identify those notes can move by steps: sometimes stepping up, and other times stepping down

#### **4.2.3 Lessons 5 and 6 Plans**

**a) Curriculum Contents.** In Lesson 5, the curriculum suggests the introduction of the terms *piano* and *forte* used for dynamics and their associated symbols, *p* and *f*. The teacher started the lesson with a review of the “See Saw” song by singing it using the notes for solfege (sol-mi-la) and then the words of the song. As suggested in the curriculum, the teacher and students then tried to sing this song quietly and loudly using the newly learned concept of dynamics.

For students to better understand this new music concept, the teacher used a song suggested in the curriculum that is called “Loud! Quiet!” where students and the teacher can move and dance according to the music’s direction: When they hear the word “loud” they jump; if they hear the word “quiet,” they squat or crouch down on the floor. There was always some sort of movement and dance in the activities performed during the lessons. Students had lots of fun while they were learning new songs and music concepts by singing and/or moving and dancing around the classroom.

With regard to the symbols *p* and *f* for the dynamic terms *piano* and *forte*, respectively, the curriculum suggested the use of “dynamic dice,” a soft dice toy with these symbols on two sides that the students and teacher play with by rolling it along the floor. Students loved to play with this toy in different activities such as “guessing the dynamic” where students could roll the dice, and according to the dynamic symbol shown facing up on the dice, they had to chant a



poem (“My Mittens”) in that dynamic with the option of doing so with actions (p. 19 of the student book, see Appendix B, p. 227). Students were also able to show their understanding of this concept by drawing pictures that represented soft and loud sounds.

A review of the concepts and songs learned in previous lessons was done in these two lessons as usual. The teacher and students sang and moved to the learned songs, incorporating various tempos (slow, fast, etc...) and dynamics (soft and loud).

The teacher also reviewed piano skills with the students from Lesson 5: The “stop sign” treble clef for high sounds/right hand and bass clef for low sounds/left hand and stepping pitches. The new piano skill introduced in this lesson to students was the music alphabet on the piano. The curriculum suggested to start with three notes/letters – C- D- E using the mini toy animals. These mini animals helped students to remember the alphabet names of the piano keys.

For each letter/notes of the piano keys there was an animal:

- C – Camel
- D – Deer
- E – Elephant
- F – Fox
- G – Giraffe
- A – Armadillo
- B - Bear

The teacher used a short story involving the names of the animals that was told to the students, helping them to memorize the animals/notes on the piano keys. The story is suggested in the daily plan, Lesson 5:

*Let's find the group of two black keys. The Deer is very shy and likes to hide between these black keys; they are the trees he hides in. This is our D/Deer key! When we "step up" to the next key we step up in the alphabet. What letter is "up" from D?... Yes, E! This is where the Elephant lives. He's quite large so needs lots of room. Good thing there's no black key next to him! What if we "step down" from D?... The C key is where the Camel lives. Camels live in the desert where there are few trees as well... Let's walk our fingers 2 -3 -4 to go "stepping up" and "stepping down" where our new friends live!*

Using the visual feature of the curriculum, students were able to play their first three notes on the piano by reading the letter names and seeing pictures of the animals printed on the music pages (p. 20 of the student book, see Appendix B, p. 228). The pictures of the animals printed in the pre-reading music staff facilitated all students' learning and helped them to locate the notes on the piano keys. Other activity pages were included in the student book so that they could learn about the three first notes on the piano by colouring and labeling the keys with the correct letters (pp. 21-22 of the student book, see Appendix B, pp. 229-230).

In Lesson 6, the teacher introduced a new song to the students as directed by the curriculum, "Bounce High" (p. 23 of the student book, see Appendix B, p. 231). The students practiced the concepts of short and long sounds (rhythm), solfege with sol-mi-la, singing using hand signs, and singing using the song's words. The teacher also incorporated previously learned concepts in this song such as making the students change tempo and dynamics while singing and playing

percussion instruments to keep the beat or play the rhythm.

The concept of pitches stepping up or down was reviewed in this lesson. In the listening skills, the students identified the directions that the pitches went (up or down) when the teacher played patterns on the piano. Because the curriculum is very visual, students could always refer to the visuals (pictures of the animals placed in steps in their student book) as a guide (p. 23 of the student book, see Appendix B, p. 231). This helped them to identify which direction the pitches went.

In piano skills there was no new content to introduce to students in Lesson 6. Instead, the teacher reviewed the names of the notes on the piano keys using the mini animals (Deer, Elephant, and Camel) and their locations. The students were able to place the mini animals correctly on the keyboard and then “walk” their fingers 2-3-4 to go “stepping up” and “stepping down” on C-D-E in high and low locations on the piano (p. 24 of the student book, see Appendix B, p. 232).

**b) Lessons Observations: How Students Responded to Lessons 5 and 6.** The teacher introduced the concepts of loud and soft (forte and piano) through movement and dancing. By using a kinesthetic approach with students, the teacher helped the students better understand dynamics. For example, for loud sounds, the students and teacher danced with their arms up high, and for low sounds, they slowly moved their bodies down until their hands touched the floor. After embodying these concepts through movement in the classroom, the teacher asked the students to complete their drawing activity in their books related to dynamics. The students were tasked with drawing some pictures that could represent loud and soft sounds. It was interesting to see the variety of creative drawings that the students produced in their

workbooks.

Some of these paper-based activities were assigned as homework while others were done with the teacher in the classroom if time permitted. When the activities were done at home by the students, they came back the following week with very creative drawings that they thought represented loud and soft sounds. For example, some students drew a rat for soft sounds, while for loud sounds others drew drums. In Lesson 5, the teacher assisted Student D in this activity that was done in the classroom. The teacher read the question in the student's book, "Draw a picture of something that is piano/forte" (p. 19 of student book, see Appendix B, p. 227) and asked Student D: "What do you think that could be loud/soft"? I observed, "But the teacher keeps throwing out examples, not giving Student D enough time to come up with an idea of something that could represent that kind of dynamic (Observation note – Lesson 5). By doing it in this manner, the teacher was constraining, somewhat, the student's spontaneity and creativity.

Learning is a "two-way road"; it depends on the teaching (pedagogy, methodology, approaches) and on the learning (students' different ways of learning, pace, and behaviour). For this reason, teachers must be sensitive and aware during instruction for moments of insights, opinions, comments, and questions that students always bring to the classroom. Perhaps the results of these in-classroom drawing activities could have been different and more creative. The drawings that represented loud and soft sounds done by the students in the classroom were based on the teacher's suggestions and examples in his instructions for this paper-based activity. In my view, these drawings created in the classroom were more of a teacher-oriented and -guided activity than an activity that fostered students' free-expression. The drawing activities done at home gave students more time and flexibility to complete them,

enabling the students to use their free expression.

The use of extra resources appeared to be very useful and helpful to teach new concepts. When the teacher introduced the notes on the piano to the students in Lesson 5, he started with three letter notes: C-D-E. For each letter he had toy animals that could represent these notes: C for camel, D for deer, and E for elephant. These toys were small enough that they could fit on top of the piano keys. Along with these toys, the teacher also told students a brief story using these animals (Daily plan # 5, see Appendix A, pp. 200-201). The group of the two black keys on the piano was the “two trees of the forest” where the animals lived. During Lessons 5 and 6, it was evident to me that these toys animals, which were tactile and visible to students, were helpful in teaching the three first piano notes. The teacher usually left the toys on top of the piano keys while the students played their songs/melodies from the book. This helped the students find the notes easily on the piano while reading the notes on the beginner pre-reading music staff.

During Lessons 5 and 6, and in the following lessons, the teacher gave students these toys to put on top of the piano keys before they started playing their song/melody.

Different resources provided by the teacher helped the students to express their learning and boosted their creativity during music lessons. When the teacher introduced the music alphabet to the students and the concept of stepping notes/letters, he provided small wooden cards in heart shapes that are printed with the alphabet letters, and “Duplo blocks” (Lego blocks) where students could build their own “stairs” placing the letters and/or toy animals on them. The students were so entertained and engaged building these musical stairs with the blocks, toy animals, and letters. They created a variety of stepping letter sequences—different levels of step patterns on the stairs to move the animals/letters up or down on the scale, represented in the Duplo blocks built by them.

Regarding the behaviour of Student A (very active) and Student F (distracted), I perceived that their behaviors interfered in their learning potential during guided and structured instruction. In the beginning of the lessons—especially from lessons 1 to 4—they wanted to play around in the classroom, which led them to be very easily distracted. Until Lesson 4, the teacher let the students be free to do what they wanted to do. Nevertheless, the teacher observed that these students' behaviors (Student A and F) were not leading them to learn the contents and thus, he considered trying a different approach with them.

In Lesson 5, the teacher changed his approach with these students. In this lesson, he started the class telling the students that he had a “special game” to play at the end of the class. For students to gain this “privilege” in playing this game, they had to agree to participate in all the activities planned for this lesson. No “playing around” was allowed in the lesson. When Students A and F heard this news at the beginning of the lesson, I could see that they were curious about the “special game” that they would have at the end of the lesson. They agreed with the teacher to do the activities and to follow his guided instruction without distraction. However, the teacher had to remind them at times during Lesson 5 about the special game they would play whenever he saw them losing focus.

The change in his teaching approach demonstrated that it is essential to keep students motivated in every lesson. Children like surprises as a form of reward and the idea of “something new and exciting will come if my behaviour is acceptable,” whether it is a new activity, new game, new content, or new musical instrument to play at the end of the lesson.

The change in the students' responses (Students A and F) to guided and structured instruction were apparent to both me and the teacher in Lessons 5 and 6 as I noted in one of my

observations: “Student F is much more responsive and engaged in this lesson and it is visible that she got into the routine and used to how the teacher teaches” (Observation notes – Lesson 6).

With Students A and F more focused, they showed in Lessons 5 and 6 that they had learned some musical concepts acquired in previous lessons: soft and loud sounds and recognizing the first three notes on the piano keys (C-D-E) and in their activity book pages. In Lesson 5, the teacher also took more control of the students’ behaviour by keeping them motivated and focused. The growing rapport between the teacher and students also helped in relation to the teaching and learning process as both parties learned what to expect from each other within the classroom. By Lessons 5 and 6 the teacher had a better understanding of the students’ behaviour, how they learn, and their specific learning paces and needs. Additionally, the students became accustomed to the routine of the lessons, the teacher’s approach, and ways he conducts the class. After the teacher changed his instructional approach to managing the behaviours of Students A and F, these students became more focused and settled in the classroom and were better able to demonstrate their learning of the lessons’ contents, especially through game-based activities, which were used to reinforce contents learned in previous lessons.

As previously mentioned, the teacher’s kinesthetic approach to teaching and learning music concepts and piano skills was very effective. The use of songs that provided movement and action such as “Tony Chestnut,” “See Saw,” “Bounce High,” “The Rhythm and the Beat,” and “Simon Says,” helped to reinforce the learning of key music concepts taught in classes (steady beat versus rhythm, dynamics, singing, long and short sounds, high and low sounds, finger numbers). It also provided an opportunity for students to learn about hand signs for solfege

(Mi-Sol-La), and to work on their gross and fine motor coordination (stand, squat, body parts, and finger numbers identification).

The children had lots of fun and were excited during these moments of action and movement in the lessons as I noted in this excerpt: “Teacher and student sing the music ‘Tony Chestnut’ in soft and loud ways. Student B responds very well and had fun singing very loud” (Observation notes – Lesson 5). I noted that students learn most when they have chances to move freely in the classroom; dancing, singing, or playing games, but with instruction guided by the teacher. Generally, the teacher and students did the movement activities together. In this manner, the children relied on the teacher as a model to learn key music concepts by copying his movements and actions and singing either when they had reasonable comprehension of the language spoken by the teacher or when they had difficulties understanding the teacher’s instructions in English. Thus, copying the teacher by repeating similar activities and songs week-by-week was an effective way of learning. Overall, the students in this study were fast learners and had good abilities to memorize contents from previous lessons.

**c) Students’ Learning Outcomes After Lessons 5 and 6.** At the end of Lessons 5 and 6, students were able to:

- Recognize the dynamics of loud and quiet in songs, and identify their respective symbols: *f* and *p*
- Identify the notes C-D-E on piano keys associating it with animals’ names
- Build patterns of “stepping up and down” using Duplo Blocks, mini animals, and alphabet hearts



- Practice listening skills to recognize pitches going up or down on the piano

#### 4.2.4 Lessons 7 and 8 Plans

**a) Curriculum Content.** The new music concept introduced in Lesson 7 was about the “skip pitch.” The curriculum suggested that the teacher play some patterns of steps versus skips on the piano while students walk to the beat. When students heard skipped pitches, they skipped around the classroom.

In piano skills, the teacher introduced two more letters/notes to students as directed by the curriculum: A and B. As usual, the teacher assigned animal names for these new letters – Armadillo and Bear. A new story now including these two animals was proposed in the curriculum so that the teacher could use it while placing the new mini animals on the piano keys:

*“What letter comes before C in the alphabet?... Yes, B. And on the keyboard the Bear lives next to the Camel. Bear likes to be close to trees, but he likes open space too... What comes before B?... This is the Armadillo. He’s much smaller so likes to have a place to hide from the bigger animals during the day when he’s asleep... between these three black keys. We need all five fingers to play all five of our friends. Let’s start on A and step up all the way to E!”*

While the teacher demonstrated how to “walk” fingers up and down these five keys, he used the verse below that was suggested in the daily plan, Lesson 7:

*“Armadillo sleeps all day, when big Bear is out to play. Camel is a friendly guy, but the Deer is very shy, Elephant remembers all: E-D-C-B-A, that’s all!”*

Regarding pre-reading the music staff, the curriculum presented the addition of the third line to

facilitate students in identifying more steps. Beside the notes drawn on lines and spaces at the staff, it also contained the pictures of the animals printed below the notes. That visual feature helped students to quickly play and locate the notes stepping and/or skipping up and down on the staff (p. 25 of the student book, see Appendix B, p. 233). In order to play a skipped key on piano, the teacher advised students that they must skip a finger. They practiced the skill of skipping a finger on the piano keys in both Lessons 7 and 8.

With the addition of the letters A and B, the students were able to create more patterns of steps and skips using Duplo Blocks, mini animals, and alphabet hearts. The curriculum presented a visual guide of steps and skips, which helped the students to build their own real steps and skips using Duplo Blocks and mini animal toys (p. 25 of student book, see Appendix B, p. 233).

Most of the curriculum's contents in Lesson 8 were a review of all the contents addressed during the previous lessons. There was, however, a new concept suggested for this lesson, which was "skip 2 pitches." The students were able to play the song "See Saw" on the piano (which they used to sing) with "skip 2 pitches" in the song (p. 28 of the student book, see Appendix B, p. 236). The teacher related the same idea of "if we skip a key, we must skip a finger" to the "skip 2 pitches" by saying to students, "If we skip two keys, we skip two fingers." The students quickly understood the concept and reproduced it on the piano by playing the "See Saw" music. The curriculum suggested students be given the opportunity to play "skip keys" on the piano using songs that they had learned and sung during previous lessons such as "Starlight, Starbright," "Bounce High, Bounce Low," and "See Saw" (pp. 27 - 28 of the student book, see Appendix B, pp. 235-236).

As an extra activity (not included in the curriculum and lesson plans), the teacher presented two more letters of the alphabet: F and G, and the animals Fox and Giraffe. At the end of Lesson 8, the students learned the seven letters of the music alphabet on the piano and created more steps and skips patterns using Duplo Blocks, mini animals, and alphabet hearts. The teacher did not go into much detail in prompting the students to locate and identify these two extra notes on the piano, but instead they practiced and reinforced the concepts of step and skip notes using the tactile materials described above.

**b) Lessons Observations: How Students Responded to Lessons 7 and 8.** In Lesson 7, the teacher introduced two more letter notes, A and B, and for these notes he also added new mini animals: A for armadillo and B for bear. He also extended the story adding these two new animals. The children had lots of fun using these toys animals, manipulating them on the piano keys, and placing them in different groups of the two and three black keys along the piano keyboard. Some students, such as Students B and D, extended the teacher's animals story by creating new stories. They added new animals as they followed the music alphabet order, moving the toys animals on the piano and re-arranging them in different groups of two black keys (different "two trees forest"), as I noted in this excerpt: "Teacher tells a short story with the animals, Student D extends this story and talks about other kinds of animals" (Observation notes – Lesson 7).

In addition to the mini animals, another resource used in classes was the floor keyboard. When the teacher reviewed the concept of steps and skips of the notes on the piano in Lessons 7 and 8, he played a variety of skipping and stepping groups of notes so that students could hear and recognize the difference of these sounds. The students could walk/step up and down the keys on the floor keyboard and also, they were able to skip one or two keys by jumping over it

(Daily plan # 7, see Appendix A, pp. 204-205). The students loved to “step” or “skip” on the keyboard keys.

This kinesthetic approach proved to be very helpful in the children’s learning. The children loved to move around in the classroom, which is a way to experiment with and embody musical concepts while learning. With the use of these helpful resources (toys animals and floor keyboard) for teaching musical concepts and piano skills, the students were able to associate concepts using, for example, the animals’ names while singing and playing on the piano and skipping on notes as I noted in one of the lessons: “He (Student D) also can play skips on the piano (D – B). While he plays, he also sings the names of the animals: Deer – Bear – Deer – Bear” (Observation notes - Lesson 8).

Other resources such as rhythm sequence cards, which are printed on heavy paper and laminated for long lasting use, were very useful for rhythm learning. The students were able to create their own sequences of rhythm by mixing different notes values, rests, and displaying them on the board so that both the teacher and students were able to clap a variety of sequences created by the students and sometimes by the teacher. The students really enjoyed this activity as they felt a sense of ownership of their learning when they were able to create and to clap their own rhythm sequences.

During lesson observations, I perceived that the children were happy and willing to learn, and to participate in the lessons. They were very creative, good listeners, and fast learners. Overall, they were curious, cooperative, and expressed their thoughts and insights with ease. I also noted that there were different ways in which students learn best. One way is by copying the teacher’s movements and gestures, especially when presented with something concrete, tactile,

or visible, in order to understand some of the musical concepts taught by the teacher. In the lessons that the teacher was doing solfege with students, he sang the melody while moving his hands for the mi-sol-la notes, and the children instinctively moved their hands, copying the teacher's gestures. This was repeated in every lesson and by the end of Lessons 7 and 8, I observed that the children were more confident, moving their hands freely during solfege without appearing to copy the teacher. When the teacher introduced the content about stepping notes (Lesson 4), he had the idea of showing children a real staircase located in the hallway of the studio. They went to the stairs and the teacher went up and down, telling the students that he was stepping up or down with the notes. By seeing the teacher stepping up or down the stairs, it was easy for the children to grasp the concept of stepping up or down on the notes. The action was visible and tactile for the students.

I also observed that as the lessons progressed, the relationship built throughout these weeks between the teacher and students helped the students to become familiar with the teacher's way of speaking and ways of conducting lessons. They could expect a steady and predictable routine in the lessons from week to week, and this may have helped the students to learn as they became accustomed to the teacher's way of teaching. Moreover, as the lessons progressed, the slow pace of the teacher's speech, the repetition and review of previous activities and content, and the consistent routine for how the lessons were delivered, were important factors for the students to learn in a second language environment. This was especially visible with Students C and E whose proficiency with English was limited.

Another factor that was important for students' learning is related to musical skills. Some students, such as Students A, B, D, and E, demonstrated that they had a good ear for music although most of them (except for Student A) did not have previous music instruction. This

was apparent when some of them—such as student D—could sing on pitch with the teacher, or could build and clap rhythm patterns (such as Students A, B, C, D, and E) using new music signs such as quarter rests and eighth notes (that were presented to students in their last two lessons), or when they created their own compositions using Duplo blocks and alphabet letters built on the floor. Student E was able to work with these blocks building her musical stairs, putting the music alphabet letters in sequence in a way that the notes could be displayed/arranged separately like a melody, or together like chords.

Student E took the initiative to create sounds that could be played separately or together. She was curious to know how her musical creation would sound. So, the teacher played what the student had built with Duplo blocks and alphabet letters on the piano. The teacher explained to Student E that she had made melodies and chords with blocks and letters by separating (melody) or combining (harmony) them. Student E felt proud of her musical composition after she heard it played on the piano by the teacher. Student E also wanted to play her composition on the piano and for that she put all the toy animals on the piano keys. These toy animals aided students in locating the correct notes on the piano keyboard. Student E was able to try out her “composition” on the piano, playing the notes as melodies (separately) and as harmonies (together). The students made concerted efforts during the lessons to try and understand the teacher’s instructions and to learn the music content and concepts. This was especially true of students with limited English language proficiency such as Students C and E, who were in general very focused during lessons. In addition, the students expressed enjoyment and pleasure each week during music lessons, which appeared to be an important source of their motivation to learn.

Assessment of students’ learning was performed as an ongoing activity throughout the eight

lessons during this study. By reviewing content taught in previous lessons and repeatedly performing activities (singing, clapping rhythms, dancing, and doing solfege with hand signs), it was evident how much the students learned. They were able to sing along with and remember lyrics to songs that were sung during lessons, clap and build simple rhythm patterns, recognize different music concepts such as long and short sounds, high and low sounds, dynamics, stepping and skipping pitches, as well introductory concepts of piano studies.

Some evidence of the students' learning was demonstrated during Lessons 7 and 8 as I noticed in some of my observation notes such as, "Student C makes rhythm sequences on the board and she knows how to clap: Ta's and Ta-oo's." Additionally, "teacher reviews the contents about steps and skips of the notes and plays some of them on the piano. Student C steps and skips on the floor keyboard as she could recognize the differences between the two"

(Observation notes – Lesson 7). The learning of finger numbers and proper hand positions on the piano was demonstrated by Student B in Lesson 7, as I recorded in this excerpt: "Student B can recognize very well the finger numbers. He can position his hands/fingers on the spider chart activity. Teacher touches some of his fingers and student is able to say them fast with his eyes closed" (Observation notes – Lesson 7). Student A, who was very active in the classroom, demonstrated learning about the difference between beat and rhythm: "Teacher asks the difference about rhythm and beat. Student A answers: "rhythm changes and beat does not change" (Observation notes – Lesson 8). In Lesson 8, Student F, who was very distracted, also demonstrated evidence of learning: "Student recognizes the high keys/sound on piano. Teacher asks: 'If the animals decide to live in the high forest, where do they go? Can you move the animals?' Student F moves toy animals to the high keys" (Observation notes- Lesson 8).

Student F demonstrated her learning of some concepts with the teacher's coaching, such as step

and skip notes: “Student recognizes steps and skips but she has to look to the piano while teacher is playing so she can see whether he’s playing steps or skips keys/notes. Teacher allowed her to look to the piano” (Observation notes – Lesson 8). Student E was a fast learner and showed good skills for music: “Student E is able to clap rhythm sequences of: Ta’s and Ta-oo’s, and quarter rests (which is new for student). Teacher just introduced to student this rest symbol today, in Lesson 8, and student understood the concept quickly” (Observation notes – Lesson 8). Student D was very creative and a happy student in the classroom. In Lesson 8, “Student D can solfege the notes Mi-Sol-La and do the hand signs for these notes without teacher’s coaching. He also can sing along with good pitch” (Observation notes – Lesson 8).

I noticed that Students A, B, D, and E—who demonstrated better skills for music—acquired the music concepts faster than the others. They also expanded and suggested modifications in activities proposed by the teacher during music lessons as I noted in one of my observations: “Student E tries the floor keyboard. She suggests to skip and step on this floor keyboard on the tune of ‘Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.’ Teacher plays the music on the piano, student skips and steps on the floor keyboard. They both had fun together” (Observation notes – Lesson 8).

### **c) Students’ Learning Outcomes at the End of Lessons.**

After eight weeks of music lessons and discussing with the teacher all the things we observed regarding the students’ musical learning progress and experience, we agreed that eight weeks of lessons were sufficient to see the results of the students’ learning. We could clearly see the students making sense of the concepts and applying them in practice. It was also evident that students’ overall English language comprehension increased substantially in the last lessons. This was due to the establishment of a routine in the lessons, progressively structuring the



concepts taught to students. The students became accustomed to the teacher's methodology and pedagogical approach. Also, they became familiar with how the teacher spoke. Repetition of musical concepts and activities were essential for children's learning. This was visible as I recorded in my note: "Student C's expectations are clearer today about the routine of her class" (Observation notes – Lesson 8). Homework assignments and piano practices were also equally important in improving students' learning. The teacher usually recommended piano practice at least five days a week. In the classroom, both the teacher and I could see how practicing made such a difference in some students' musical progress (Students B, C, D, and E), which I noted: "We see that Student C had practiced piano at home" (Observation notes – Lesson 8). In general, students evidenced being able to play short melodies on the piano, follow the rhythm, and use correct finger numbers with proper hand positions.

#### **4.3 Interview Analysis**

I performed interviews with the students and the teacher separately at the midpoint of the lessons (between weeks five and six). The students' interviews were approximately 15 minutes in length. I interviewed each student individually in the studio's music classroom. There were only two cases in which students were interviewed with their parents present. This was necessary due to the limited English language proficiency of these two students, which affected their understanding of my questions (interview questions were formulated in English), and ability to answer them in English. At times, these students needed some help from their parents to translate my questions from English to the families' first language. By having their parents beside them, the students were better able to understand my questions and to provide more accurate answers. The teacher's interview took about 45 minutes. This interview was also done in the studio's music classroom after the last lesson. I also made a short audio recording from

an informal conversation between the teacher and myself discussing some discoveries that I made in the study up to that point in time. Some insights surfaced during this conversation that I found important and worth recording. Some transcriptions of this recording are quoted in this thesis to complement and/or reinforce my analysis. It is important to note that the teacher gave permission for this conversation to be audio recorded and transcribed to be quoted in the thesis.

From the students' and teacher's interviews, I observed that some words were used frequently. These key words informed the development of the themes presented in this section. Therefore, I used a thematic analysis in the interviews. In summary, I created three distinct themes: (1) Piano teaching and learning, (2) Games and play, and (3) Language. One of these themes, Games and play, was sub-divided into three sub-themes: a) the racing to piano game, b) solfege and hand signs, and c) tactile materials.

All the interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and later transcribed.

#### ***4.3.1 Interviews Themes***

**4.3.1 a. Piano Teaching and Learning.** As I read interview transcriptions and heard student interviews, I noticed a common word that appeared quite often during the interviews: piano. Students mentioned that they liked the piano instrument the most in their music lessons. Some students answered that one of the things they liked most in the research lessons was to “play piano and practice” (Interview 1, Student A). The time to play their simple melodies and songs on the piano during the music lessons was for most of them very exciting because they really enjoyed applying to the piano what they had learned regarding rhythms and notes. Most of the students did not have any previous musical instruction, with the exception of Student A. During the same period of the study, this student also took private piano lessons at home. He

brought the piano songs he was learning in his private lessons to the group lessons. He also liked to play some of these songs/melodies for the music teacher in this study. For the rest of the students, piano instruction was new and exciting for them. These students often expressed joy when learning a short melody during lessons.

Piano instruction was not the focus of this research project, it was the learning of general music concepts. Piano was offered as an opportunity for these students to learn some basic skills and be able to play simple melodies on it. Each music lesson was 30 minutes long and piano instruction took 10 to 15 minutes of each lesson. The teacher did not use a traditional piano method for teaching the student participants. All the piano content (right and left hands, finger numbers, hand positions, groups of two and three black keys, high and low pitches, bass clef and treble clef, step and skip notes, rhythm and note names, etc.) were taught from the curriculum designed specifically for these lessons while the music concepts were drawn from the Music Program of Study from Alberta Education. Even though piano instruction was not the focus of this study, the activities performed on the instrument garnered attention and curiosity from the students. The students liked to play on the piano and this activity was mentioned several times during their interviews. Therefore, the word piano became a key word and thus it was worthwhile to develop a theme of it in my analyses.

The teacher used a variety of resources and activities to teach the introductory concepts for piano studies and to correct some piano problems, such as posture or hand positions. The use of the “Spider Fingers” resource was very helpful to students in learning hand positions and finger numbers. By using the spider paper activity, the students could see concretely their fingers curved on the spider drawings. Thus, the concept of curved fingers was embodied by the students. In addition, the teacher regularly reminded the students of the spider hand

positions whenever they did not have proper curved fingers on the piano: “The spider is dead. Then your fingers are broken,” reminding students of the “spider position” (Teacher’s interview). As a way to correct the bad posture of students while sitting at the piano, the teacher sometimes made the students do posture exercises such as asking them to stand up against the wall and then return to the piano while keeping their backs straight and sitting down. This kind of exercise helped students to move around the classroom, giving them a little break from the piano, while at the same time providing a solution for the teacher to fix students’ piano posture problems.

The piano instrument was also mentioned by most of the students during interviews as being a reason and motivation for them to learn music in a second language. The joy of learning general music concepts and playing simple melodies on the piano helped students to overcome difficulties or concerns they might have had with the English language. Student E expressed sentiments of joy in their interview (interview 4):

Researcher: Do you like to have music lessons in English?

Student E: Yeah

Researcher: Why do you like to have music classes in English?

Student E: Oh, maybe because of... I just like music lessons in the piano

Researcher: What does the teacher do that best helps you learn music in English?

Student E: I think he helps me by having me to the piano. Oh, and also, he helps me with the fun activities.

Student C mentioned that she likes music, to play the piano, and that she likes English. This response showed that students were engaged and motivated to have piano and general music lessons, even if in a second language because they like music. The language of instruction of these lessons became secondary for students. This was apparent when I asked a question to Student C: “Would it be more comfortable for you to have music lessons in your native language rather than in English”? (Interview 2). The student answered: “It doesn’t matter” (Student C). Student C’s response showed that the language was not a hindrance for her to learn music.

#### **4.3.1 b. Games and Play**

*The Racing to Piano Game.* Another activity often mentioned by students during these interviews was related to the game activities. Children really enjoyed the “racing games” (run to the piano and try to play the keys asked by the teacher – if low or high sounds, groups of two or three black keys, to try to find C-D-E notes with correct fingers, etc.), which were played together with the teacher. There was always friendly competition in the games, which students enjoyed. They usually wanted to win the games and the teacher knew very well how to balance winning and losing turns between himself and the students. Some students, such as Student A, even mentioned and made association about these games with “exercise” or “workout” times during music lessons. When I asked, “Why do you like the racing games?” Student A answered: “I can run, and run is an exercise” (Interview 1 - Student A). This shows that keeping students moving during music lessons is an important activity, so they can’t get bored or tired and will maintain motivation. The use of games by the teacher as one of the strategies for students to learn was a great resource in helping them to learn music concepts and at the same time keep them motivated. They had lots of fun playing the racing games while

they learned important music concepts during lessons.

*Solfège and Hands Signs.* Students also enjoyed learning the music notes using the hands signs for Mi-Sol-La. The teacher started these lessons by greeting students and singing/solfège, “Hello, how are you” (usually in third interval – Mi-Sol) and at the same time using hands signs for these notes. The students immediately responded to the teacher singing, “I am fine,” and also copying the teacher using hands signs for their singing answers. For Student E, learning the notes was the thing she liked second best during lessons, next to piano. In her interview she started to sing the melody, “Star light, Star bright.” The melody of this short song stayed in the student’s mind as she was able to sing and to do the hand signs during the interview.

The hand signs for singing were helpful to students. They liked to use their hands in trying to make the signs, copying the teacher’s actions. The short melodies that were introduced to them were remembered by some students (Interview 1):

Researcher: Now think about... think about what else the teacher does to you to help you to learn music? What does he do? Do you remember when he does the hand signs?

Remember that?

Student A: See saw, up and down, in the sky and on the ground (Student A immediately starts to sing after my question).

Researcher: Good job [Student A]. So, do you like that too?

Student A: Yes

Researcher: To do the hand signs?

Student A: Yeah

Researcher: Show me Mi, show me Sol... (Student A starts to show me the hands signs for each of these three notes learned in the music lessons).

***Tactile Materials.*** The use of tactile materials, which the students and the teacher manipulated and played with during lessons were appreciated by the students. They enjoyed playing with the dynamic soft dice, which contained sides showing some dynamic marks, such as “*p*” or “*f*” (soft and loud). The students and the teacher played some games using this dice, rolling it on the floor, and according to the dynamic mark showed on the soft dice, the student had to run to the piano and play some keys in that appropriate dynamic.

Students loved to play with the rhythm cards and the blue board where they could create their own rhythm sequences. They had fun clapping those sequences as well as changing cards sometimes using other note values and rests. They also created different sequences in terms of size. Sometimes they made long sequences and sometimes they created short rhythm sequences on the blue board. The rhythm cards were a great resource for students to practice the concept of rhythm in a concrete and tactile way.

The toy animals helped students to learn the names of the notes on the piano and to locate them on the instrument. During the interviews, these toys animals were mentioned as one of their favorite activities during music lessons (Interview 3):

Researcher: What do you like the most in the music lesson?

Student D: The animals

Researcher: The animals? You mean the small animals?

Student D: Yeah

Researcher: Why do you like the animals?

Student D: Because I've been learning about animals at home. And I really loved them.

When I asked the question "What does the teacher do that best helps you learn music in English?" One of the answers that Student D gave me was related to these toys. They found it easy and helpful to play the melodies from their handbook when they had the toy animals on the piano keys. The animals helped them to learn the names of the notes faster and to locate them easier on the piano keys (Interview 3):

Researcher: What does the teacher do that best helps you learn music in English?

Student D: He does give me... um, like toys. So, I can put them on the keys in the right spot.

Student D: And... and... he... and... he also lets me play the keys that I have to put the toys in. And there's, like, five toys and I'm gonna learn like... there's two more toys and I'm gonna learn like... I think one is in a few weeks and other one in another few weeks.

Researcher: You mean new animal for the new notes?

Student D: Yeah. I know the fox and another one that starts on "A"

One response from Student B related to this same question (What does the teacher do that best helps you learn music in English?) showed me that tactile materials and the use of words that make associations to music concepts help students to memorize and learn them. Student B gave me an example of this association/way of learning also used by his music teacher at school:



(Interview 5)

Researcher: What does the teacher do that best helps you learn music in English?

Student B: Some music words come from games and can make me remember.

Researcher: That is true! So, those activities make you to remember what you learned before, correct? So, what else do you think does the teacher do that helps you to learn music? What else?

Student B: Some music words turn to like having the same sound as a common word... and this common word sounds like music word. It turns to sound somewhat closer in sounding like the animals. And you can remember the animal.

Researcher: So, let me help you with that. So, he's teaching, for example, three notes: C, D, E, and he brought animals correct? And they give you names that start with letter C and D and E correct?

Student B: Yeah.

Student B: Like... My school has a music class. And my teacher says: "Remember half rest?" And he... he says something to remember: You just turn to "hat rest"! The half turned to hat.

Researcher: That is true! So that helps you to remember and helps you to learn, right? So, for example, in this case here in piano, if you see a Camel, that just starts with letter...

Student B: Letter C.

Researcher: Letter C. So, you remember: "Oh! That is C," and you know where the C is

in the piano, right? So, for letter E what animal did he use?

Student B: Elephant

Researcher: Yeah!

It was evident that the use of tactile materials was very helpful in students' learning. They were very much engaged during lessons when manipulating these materials, while at the same time, boosting their creativity making learning more concrete and closer to the students' reality. Learning music concepts became more realistic, concrete, visible, and fun.

**4.3.1 c. Language.** It was interesting to see how easily the students and the teacher established a routine and a relationship that helped the process of teaching and learning to occur smoothly.

The students were all new immigrants in Canada with less than two years of residence in the country. Their families speak a language other than English at home. Most of the students were attending regular schools that deliver instruction in the English language, except for Student A, who was attending a French immersion school. It is important to note that, for most of these students, music instruction in the English language was a new experience for them.

The unique situation of having students with limited proficiency in English in this project was a challenge for the teacher as he had to be more aware of his teaching style, such as his rhythm of speech during instruction time and the use of expression and body language to facilitate students' understanding and learning.

During lessons, the teacher used several strategies when he perceived that the student did not understand an activity because of language comprehension. One of these strategies was to

rephrase the question and/or explanation that he had posed to the students about activities proposed and/or performed during the class. Below, we can read the teacher's response to the interview question: "What do you do if you perceive that a student does not understand the proposed activity for not mastering the second language?" (Teacher's interview):

Teacher: I'll bail on the complicated instructions and give her a much simpler version. And then she just works out something now because now I've given her much less information to work with. So, I gave her a much less complicated explanation of what the activity was... it was really primitive. And then she just figures out her own version of what that activity is going to be. And so, the details of it are worked out by her, but actually, it's the same activity. So... so... that worked.

The action of rephrasing or simplifying the explanation of the activity so that students can understand was closely related to the speed of his speech during instruction. When he rephrased an explanation, he also tried to slow down his speed of speech. Because of the students' level of English language proficiency and for being, most of them, beginners in music instruction (piano studies and general music concepts), the speed of the teacher's speech was a factor to be considered in the process of students' learning. The teacher realized that he needed to slow down his speech during instructional time, especially in the first few lessons (Teacher's interview):

Researcher: So, in the beginning, for those students who really had problems in mastering the English language, did you slow the way you speak?

Teacher: Yeah, because I generally speak fast...

Researcher: Because you rephrase, but at the same time you slow down.

Teacher: Yeah, I did, I need to slow down more. I've gotten sloppy about that, because I haven't had to, for a while. But... but yeah, slowing down is helpful.

As a native Canadian, the teacher explains that it is instinctual for him to speak quickly. It helps him to keep a constant and smooth flow of curriculum delivery and at the same time keep students engaged:

Teacher: Because going fast, is good for my..., my instincts are to go fast, because you hold attention better at a higher speed. So, if I got a student that understands me, but they're distractible, my high-speed rapid-fire instruction works well for them. And I've been doing a lot of that lately, because I tend to have students that are like that, where they're..., where they're having attention deficit issues and stuff. So, then rapid fire instruction is what I need to do, because..., because if I, if I give them slow instructions, their mind will go... I have to keep them really engaged with complicated instructions to keep..., to keep them, you know, engaged.

A lack of student engagement was not evident during lessons. Despite the lessons being taught in English, which is an additional language for these students, it was not an impediment for them to learn music. Responses such as, "Because I like music" (Student B) or "Oh, maybe because of... I just like music lessons in the piano" (Student E), were almost unanimous to the interview question: "Do you like having music lessons in a second language? Why?" Student C responded that besides liking music, "She also likes English" (Student C).

These responses demonstrated that students were motivated in taking music lessons and the top reasons were because they like music, they like to play the piano, and in some cases, they also like the language of instruction. Despite the fact that the music lessons were delivered in

English, it seems that this was not an obstacle for them to learn music. They overcame any difficulty or misunderstanding due to the language barrier during music instruction, mostly because they like music and they thought the music lessons were “a little bit fun” (Student F).

It was evident that the students were motivated and engaged to learn music. This was also recognized by the teacher during his interview:

Teacher: It's the opposite with these students because they're 100% engaged, there's no problem with that. The problem is the content. My information, my words are coming too fast for them to process. So... so, I have to be more flexible as a teacher to be able to, you know, get that maximum speed, which is great under certain circumstances, but then I have to get the much slower speed. And I haven't been doing the slower.

Researcher: Did you realize at some point, especially with those kids who had more problems in speaking and understanding English that you had to slow down the way to speak and to propose the activity for the first lessons?

Teacher: I knew that you reminded me about it. And so, I spoke too fast across the board at the beginning. I was way too fast at the beginning. The first week for everybody is too fast. I'm not sure at what the point was, when I slowed it. I was conscious of the fact that I needed to slow down. But I'm not sure how much actually did slow down. It's easier said than done.

The teacher recognized during his interview that he knew that he should have slowed down the speed of his speech, especially at the start of the research music lessons, but at the same time, he was “scrambling to figure out the curriculum.” Due to the fact of the curriculum being new

to the teacher, he had to take some time to understand it and to properly deliver it to the students. This was another factor that prevented the teacher from focusing, especially in the beginning of the lessons, on slowing down his speed of speech during instruction time. The teacher spoke clearly about the situation that he had to understand the curriculum first so that he could feel comfortable and confident in teaching it to the students, while at the same time he had to pay attention to the pace of his speech:

In the beginning also, I was scrambling to figure out the curriculum. And so, I think a lot of my attention at the beginning was to understand it... because the curriculum was new to me. And so, at the beginning, I was scrambling to just figure that out. So, I think at the beginning, I was really engaged in trying to figure out the curriculum. Too much so. And then once I had sort of an understanding of the flow, which took a period of weeks that I think it just worked better, I was clearer, I was a lot clearer, because I was clear on what I was doing. And so, I think everything became clear over time, but I may have also slowed down, I should have slowed down. (Teacher's interview)

As the teacher gained clarity about the curriculum over the weeks' lessons, he became more comfortable and relaxed in teaching it to the students. A good relationship between the teacher and students, as well as a steady routine of instructional delivery, was established within the classroom. These two factors associated with mastery of the curriculum by the teacher were essential for him to pay more attention to his speed of speech during instruction, especially with those students who had more difficulties in understanding and communicating in the English language. By week 6 of the lessons, the teacher's change in instructional approach was evident regarding his speed of speech as well as in the progress of student's learning, which I noted in my observations:

Student C understands better the teacher as the lessons progress. The relationship built during these weeks between teacher and Student C helped the student to catch the teacher's way of speaking and way of conducting the lessons every week. Student C can expect a steady routine every week and this helps Student C to learn as she gets used to the teacher's way of teaching.

(Observation notes - Lesson 6)

It was evident to me that by weeks 7 and 8 the language ceased to be a barrier to students to learn music in a second language. That was due to many reasons: A consistent lesson routine, a well-established relationship between the teacher and students within the classroom, and the use of a consistent pedagogy by the teacher (the nature of how he taught students) all contributed to the progress of students' learning. Students' progress and the evidence that the language was no longer a barrier for their learning was also noted by the teacher in one of our conversations:

Teacher: The language barrier became less and less, and the progress of the students became faster and faster. By the, by the time we hit week eight, especially week seven, and week eight, and the language barrier seems to become irrelevant, because we establish routines, we establish the rules in the classroom work, they no longer had to think about any of that, any of those things. And even if they couldn't carry on a long conversation in English about any subject, they were able to do all of the things we need to do for music within the classroom. And so, their learning was accelerated dramatically.

Researcher: Yes because they know... they already had big sense of the routine.

Teacher: Yes, exactly.

Researcher: Expectations, right?

Teacher: Yeah, everything was in place. So, they didn't have to work on any basic management of the relationship anymore. Relationship was in place. They knew what to say to me for relationship, I knew what to say to them for relationship. And so, we were just building on a well-established relationship. And so, there was progress, because we were friends by week eight. And so, then the language was really quite secondary.

Researcher: Even the way the teacher teaches, that constant methodology used every week, it makes easier for them to learn...

Teacher: It's discovery learning every week. It's always really, it's always discovery learning every week. And so, even if they weren't used to that learning approach, they would be used to it by the time we had been in that doing that for eight weeks.

It was clear, indeed, that in the beginning of the research lessons, the language was a barrier for most of these students. The teacher and students were building rapport and classroom work rules, and the teacher was setting up the teaching methodology to work with these students. The nature of his teaching approach was very physical. There was a lot of movement in the classroom, use of symbols (rhythm cards, hands signs, clapping games), and audio songs. During lessons, it was not necessary for the teacher to use lots of words. Instructions were simple and straightforward and most of the time they were rephrased. Many of the English words used were simple commands and also, they were mostly repeated every week. The curriculum was designed to be taught in a very physical and practical approach. The teacher had the flexibility to use the kinesthetic and discovery learning approaches (the open exploration and discovery when the teacher and student don't worry about the curriculum too



much) giving students many opportunities to explore body parts and movements, manipulating different percussion instruments and tactile resources, and expanding their learning in music contents by extending activities proposed by the teacher.

According to the teacher, “The language was a barrier in the beginning. It’s not a barrier by week eight. It had effectively ceased being a barrier” (Teacher’s interview). He also wondered if the reason for the language not being a barrier at a certain stage of the research lessons was because of the nature in how he taught these students: It might have contributed in not hindering the students’ learning. During the teacher’s interview I asked a question: “In your view, do you think the language was a barrier for these students to learn music?” and he said:

Teacher: This is something I’ve been thinking about. The language was a barrier in the beginning. It’s not a barrier by week eight. Was that because of the nature of how I taught it, which was pretty physical? There was a lot of physical. There wasn’t a lot of words, really. You basically could learn everything by your ear, and by the symbols, and it wasn’t much English specific, and I wonder if that might not have accelerated their ability to be not hindered at all by week eight. In fact, outstanding by week eight, these kids were great. They were basically all great.

Besides the approach used by the teacher, there is the fact that most of the students did not have previous music instruction. This also might have contributed to them being open and willing to learn, and to experiment. These students did not show any preconceptions or raise questions related to the music content, songs, and activities that the teacher proposed in the classroom. They were content doing it all. They even extended most of the games proposed by the teacher during lessons, which was noted by the teacher during our interview:

You've given them this first thing to start off with. And then they just, they just expand it with more play. It's like, well... how else... now I've got this game going. How could I? What else could I do with this game? They're not hindered. There's no rule. They're not hindered by... they don't know what's supposed to happen. They don't know they're not supposed to compose music. So, they just start composing music with the Duplo. That's not how you compose music, until now. (Teacher's interview)

As for the teacher, he thinks that, "the kids that started with zero (no previous music instruction), it was the easiest for them to learn, because there's no perceived expectation about what's going to happen" (Teacher's interview). So, the fact that the students did not have previous music instruction was a positive point for them to be willing to learn the music concepts addressed in the curriculum, which was designed especially for their lessons. According to the teacher, "Their (students) expectation of a routine in piano classes is 100% shaped by what they do with me. And I like what we did. It was interesting. I like a lot. I like the curriculum. It's a great curriculum." (Teacher's interview).

The curriculum was especially designed for students between 5 and 9 years old. The songs, activities and resources suggested in the curriculum were all appropriate for this age range. The fact that most of the students (except for Student A) did not have previous music instruction (music skills and/or instruction were not a requirement for these students to participate in this study) was an important element that contributed to these children accepting all the activities proposed by the teacher.

In addition to this "level zero" of students' music instruction, there is the factor of language limitation of these students. Their level of English proficiency was not advanced, which

contributed to keeping students interested and motivated to learn music, and at the same time, the English language. For these students, every lesson was a discovery of English words, body part names, music contents, symbols, and other music terminologies. The curriculum worked very well for every student, including the older ones (Students C and E) with language limitations. The teacher noted during his interview that,

There was nothing about the curriculum that you would say, Oh, that's for kids. Because you could have a slightly younger curriculum and there was nothing about it that made it "kiddish." There's nothing "kiddish" about the curriculum. So, they weren't going to feel like, "Oh, these are unrealistic, 'babyish.'" So, I think that made it pretty universal.

Overall, the lessons were mostly activity based, involving music, movement, and audio music. The curriculum provided simple music-based instructions. The music lessons were kinesthetic, physical, and explored the use of multiple instruments (percussion instruments). Because the lessons were predominantly activity based, there was little need of verbal language for music instructions. According to the teacher,

The fact that is in English (referring to the music lessons), and not their mother tongue is irrelevant, because there's hardly any, any language. I mean, language is being spoken. But the language is mostly music language, with trivial simple English being used. So, all they had to learn is a few trivial simple English, most of which words are repeated every week. (Teacher's interview).

In fact, the use of this activity-based approach during lessons leads me to suspect that it was critical for enhancing students' learning. I wonder if the teacher had used a more rote traditional piano instruction if the students would have responded the same? It appeared to me that the

instructional approach (activity-based lessons, music and movement) was effective in helping the students to learn music concepts in a second language.

#### **4.4 Cross-Analysis of Data**

##### ***4.4.1 a. Curiosity and Creativity***

It was evident throughout all the research lessons that the students were curious. They demonstrated this curiosity in every single lesson by asking the teacher, for example, what would be the new “animal” for the new letter/note that they would learn in that day/or future lessons. They were also curious about the new contents and songs that would be taught on a given day, and what new percussion instruments would be introduced to experience new sounds and timbres. Visual resources on the classroom’s walls (Kodaly hand signs), resources such as tactile materials (rhythm cards, mini animals, Duplo Blocks, alphabet hearts, floor keyboard, etc...) also contributed to trigger student’s curiosity.

Even though the students’ curiosity was visible during all the lessons, the level of this curiosity was higher at the beginning of the lessons. I suspect this is because children are curious about “the new”: New school (in this case, a new place for learning music), new music teacher, new contents, and new instruments. Sometimes, the students’ curiosity helped them to focus during instructional times and kept them motivated to continue participating in the lessons.

Occasionally, the teacher triggered students’ curiosity/motivation before the beginning of a lesson by letting them know that a new game or instrument would be played or used at the end of the class. In exchange, the students were required to follow the teacher’s instructions and do the activities planned for that day. This strategy used by the teacher, improved the student’s behaviour in class, especially with those (such as Students A and F) who were more active,

unmotivated, or reluctant to do some activities during lessons.

Besides being curious, the students were also very creative. Their creativity along with spontaneity and willingness in learning led the students to expand many activities proposed by the teacher during research lessons. The resources used in class, such as percussion instruments, tactile materials, visual resources, as well as activities and songs proposed in the curriculum, were key elements to boost students' creativity.

For example, by using Duplo Blocks, mini animals, and alphabet letters, students were able to create their own steps and skip pitches. With the addition of the two extra music alphabet letters (F and G) brought by the teacher as an expansion of the learning, some students were able to compose their own song/sound using the heart letters in groups (as a chord) or separately (as a melody) stacked on the Duplo Blocks.

I could see the happiness of Student E in the classroom when the teacher played her composition on the piano. She liked the sound of it and felt proud of herself. She also wanted to try playing the "chords" (pressing three piano keys at the same time) even though it was a bit hard for her. The teacher praised her achievement by saying that she made something really good and creative, and told Student E the proper names for what she had created with the Duplo Blocks: Chords and melodies.

The students' creativity was also seen in their ability to create new rhythm sequences using cards and they were able to clap hands and walk around the room to these sequences. They expanded stories using mini animals on the piano keys and included new ones as the teacher introduced new notes. The students also showed lots of creativity by drawing, labeling, and coloring activities in their student book. For those students with a more limited proficiency in

the English language (such as Student C), they used their creativity by using body language to answer some of the teacher's questions in different activities during lessons, or by drawing or coloring in different ways to answer questions in their books.

The teacher noted that, "They were not hindered" (teacher's interview), during music lessons and their creativity was used to expand many activities and games with more play. I wonder if the pedagogical approach of the teacher (discovery learning), together with play-based activities, had contributed to the improvement of students' learning. It appeared to boost the creativity associated with children's natural curiosity, which resulted in constant engagement and motivation of these students throughout the lessons.

The students' curiosity and creativity were observed by me in many lessons, discussed by students during interviews, acknowledged by the teacher in his interview, and reflected in the curriculum in different written activities done by the students in their books.

#### ***4.4.1 b. Play-Based Activities: Games, Music and Movement***

The subjects of music and movement, games, and activities based on play were recurrent in all data sources. During the interviews, the students mentioned that they loved the racing game to the piano performed with the teacher during music instruction. Sometimes they associated this activity (to run to the instrument) with a time to exercise, to move freely around the classroom, and to have fun while competing with the teacher in "Who's going to reach the piano first?"

Other games performed during music lessons using tactile materials such as the dynamics soft dice, mini animals, Duplo Blocks, floor keyboard, heart alphabets, and so on, were used to stimulate students in being engaged and motivated during lessons while the games promoted a

fun way for students to learn music concepts and piano skills.

These games and playful activities were also used as a great resource to change students' behaviours and to increase attention spans. There were moments during lessons that the music teacher had to take different directions due to a student being distracted or lacking focus/interest when he was introducing a new concept or performing certain activities. The teacher noted during our interview that, "There are times you have down activities, there are times when you have up activities." He was conscious of "what their (students') movement is, so that we're not sitting for long periods of time or standing for long periods of time." This way, I perceived during lesson observations, that the teacher was aware of these "up and down moments" and could come up with a different activity or game. Mostly, he approached the same music concept with a different activity, considering the way each individual student liked to learn. Some of them liked to play with the rhythm cards, try out different percussion instruments, or race around the room.

According to the teacher, "Some of them respond to certain activities, they like certain activities. And then I'll do that activity in the thing that they like. If they liked the racing, then they will do the race" (Teacher's interview). Certainly, students have different ways of learning and different paces in this learning process. This was visibly taken into account by the teacher during research lessons. He stated that he, "doesn't like, neither work with a stereotypical" approach. He thinks it is "very pragmatic" to 'label' a student by saying: "This child is a kinesthetic or whatever." It really depends on the situation, and "What is going to work for that student," in that moment of the lesson. The teacher was very flexible in the way he approached and taught students. He used lots of resources such as games, a kinesthetic approach (movements, actions, dancing), visual resources (gestures, body language, pictures) and verbal

communication. The students could learn music through concrete, physical experiences.

Activities involving music and movement were intensely explored by the teacher and happily experienced by the students throughout the lessons. The curriculum that was created and designed to be used in this study offered and suggested lots of activities that required dancing, actions, singing, and movements to be performed during lessons. The music concepts as well as the piano skills were taught in a very physical manner by the teacher and that was accelerated and supported by the curriculum's design. The content addressed in the curriculum was not intended to be taught in rote traditional methods; instead, they were delivered through a variety of music and movement activities.

The use of the kinesthetic approach to teach and learn music concepts and piano skills provided countless benefits such as the student's embodiment of the concept by experiencing it first before formally naming it. According to the teacher, "You explain the concept after they experienced the concept. And then they're putting words to something they're already looking for words to. They noticed something different, and now what is that?" (Teacher's interview).

Activities performed with music and movement also promoted the practice of gross and fine motor coordination (squat, stand, walking on tiptoes, finger number recognition and exercises, etc.), increased students' awareness of these movements in addition to providing moments of joy for these children during music lessons.

Because of the nature of the lessons—in how they were taught to students; using lots of music and movement—the verbal language for communication was used at a minimum. There was mostly music language (audio, singing, dancing, actions) and less verbal language. The language spoken during the lessons was simple and most of the phrases were repeated every



week.

As described during my interview analysis, most of the student participants did not have previous music instruction and for them, music lessons in the English language were a new experience. The students were really motivated, engaged, and willing to participate in all activities without criticism. During the research lessons, the teacher and students gradually built very strong relationships. By weeks 7 and 8, they knew what to expect from each other in terms of class work, routine, class rules, and behaviour. The students' expectations were shaped by the teacher.

The teacher established a consistent and strong classroom routine with the students. After a few weeks, the teacher had mastered the curriculum and its contents and so, he was more clear and comfortable in what and how to teach these students who had limited proficiency in English. Using a kinesthetic approach, gestures and body language, and discovery learning, the teacher facilitated students in learning music concepts and piano skills in a second language. In response to my question, "What do you do when the activity proposed in the classroom is not well understood by the student?" He noted that he prefers to "Do something physical that embodies the concept. So then, they figure it out because they're doing something." For these students who had limited English proficiency (such as students C and E), the use of words by the teacher to introduce a new music concept was sometimes meaningless or not helpful. Thus, he would rather use a kinesthetic approach.

In addition to the students' motivation and willingness to learn and the teacher's pedagogical approach, the teacher and I noted that the curriculum also had an important role in the teaching-learning process. The curriculum was especially designed for this study and uses the

outcomes of the Alberta curriculum (Music Program of Study of Alberta Education) of some major concepts for elementary music in grades 1 and 2 in public schools. The curriculum encompassed several music concepts appropriate for children between the ages of 5 to 9 years old. These concepts were taught and learned through different approaches and activities. Students had lots of fun and moved in the classroom while they were concretely learning music in a bilingual educational environment.

The methodology of music and movement employed by the teacher provided lots of fun opportunities for the students in the classroom as they could primarily embody several music concepts and piano skills by dancing, singing, moving, and playing different percussion instruments before they had to label these concepts. A kinesthetic approach was essential and vital to keep students active, motivated, and engaged in learning. In addition, the use of games, playful activities, and tactile resources helped to reinforce and expand the learning of content in visual and tactile ways. These resources were also essential in helping the teacher to manage some students' behaviour and to keep them motivated and engaged during music lessons.

#### ***4.4.1 c. Language Was Not a Hindrance***

It is interesting to observe the music lessons being taught in a bilingual environment. It was remarkable to see the participants of this study, both the teacher and students, interacting with each other so that the process of teaching and learning of music concepts, as well as piano skills, could take place within the classroom.

The process of teaching and learning in a bilingual environment was supported by three factors: The teacher's approach, pedagogy, and methodology; the students' ways of learning, motivation, and behavior; and, a well-structured curriculum that was play-based, very visual,

and easy for both the teacher and students to follow.

**Teacher's Approach, Pedagogy, and Methodology.** To teach music in a bilingual environment to newcomer immigrant children in Canada was a new and exciting experience for the Canadian music teacher who only speaks English. In his interview he declared: "I liked what we did. It was interesting. I liked a lot," demonstrating that he also enjoyed participating in this study by teaching music meeting these children who were also very much motivated and interested in learning music.

Because of the limited proficiency (in speaking and understanding) of the English language among the students, the teacher had to use different approaches to help the students acquire several music concepts and introductory piano skills that were taught in English. He also took into account each student's way and pace of learning. By establishing the class routine, rapport with students, classroom management, and mastery of the curriculum, the teacher helped consolidate the process of teaching-learning within the classroom.

The speed of the teacher's speech was mentioned in the interview analysis as an important factor to be taken into consideration in the teaching and learning process during this study. The teacher was aware that he should have slowed down the speed of his speech, especially during the beginning of the research lessons, but at the same time, he was figuring out the curriculum, which was new for him. Once he acquired an understanding of the curriculum (which took around two to three weeks of lessons), I observed a progressive reduction of his speed of speech while teaching students, especially those with more problems in understanding the English language (such as Students C and E).

Besides reducing the pace of his speech to improve communication with students, the teacher

also rephrased questions or instructions that were posed to students during lessons. In making simple phrases, using less words and simplifying instructions, students could better understand and perform the activities. I noted that students (such as Student C) who had a more limited proficiency in English could find a way to respond to an activity or to the teacher's instructions using their creativity, although it was not exactly the way that the teacher asked them to respond. Student C was able to respond to an activity or answer some of the teacher's instructions in different ways to achieve the same result. These students grasped the general idea of the activity/instruction and responded to it correctly using different strategies with creativity.

The teacher also practiced using gestures and body language to explain music concepts and piano skills. This was an effective way to help students understand some concepts, for example, when he explained to students about curved hand positions for properly playing the piano, he put his hands around his eyes making the shape of two small circles, imitating eyeglasses. Other times, he recalled students making nice, curved hand positions as they look like two spiders (referring to the Spider fingers visual). When teaching about stepping pitches, he took students to the stairs in the studio's hallways and started to step up and down on the stairs demonstrating to them what steps up and down meant in music and piano skills. The students could grasp many music concepts by observing and copying the teacher's gestures and body language. This was observed in several lessons, especially in the first ones when the teacher welcomed students to class by singing and using hand signs for a simple, "Hello, how are you?" The students responded to the teacher in the same way by singing, "I am fine, thanks," while moving their hands to the Kodaly signs. Although the students often sung off pitch, they could perfectly reproduce the hand signs while copying the teacher. The teacher

was a model in the classroom for these students to learn music concepts and piano skills.

Music concepts, songs, piano skills, and activities were constantly reviewed by the teacher every week with the addition of new content. In the same way, simple English words and instructions used for communication during music lessons were repeated every week and became part of the routine for all students. As the lessons progressed, the students became comfortable with the teacher's way of teaching, rhythm and pace of his speech, class routines, all of which helped establish friendships between the teacher and students. All these factors contributed to the students' learning process during the eight weeks of music lessons.

Another important factor in the students' learning process was the pedagogy and methodology used by the teacher during music lessons. The way he taught these students was very physical and playful. He often introduced music concepts by making students move, dance, and sing. In these ways, the students could embody and experience the music concepts first before naming them. The students really enjoyed and had lots of fun with the variety of activities, actions, games, and songs performed during music lessons. They learned music concepts and piano skills in a fun and happy learning environment through a kinesthetic, playful, active, and concrete/visual approach.

Moreover, the teacher also employed the pedagogy of "guided discovery" wherein the teacher and students tend not to strictly follow the curriculum, making the lessons casual and allowing for spontaneous exploration of the music concepts and curriculum content. The teacher encouraged the students to explore their imaginations, creativity, and insights. The teacher also learned from the students' creativity, thoughts, ideas, and insights, considering the previous knowledge that they bring to the classroom, while building new knowledge in this process.

During the teacher's interview, he stated that "The whole approach was discovery learning." He also acknowledged, "That was me. I have content that I want them to get. I badly want them to learn a bunch of content. But I try to teach it with a discovery technique anyway. It wouldn't really matter what the curriculum is. That's how I always teach."

It was visible, while observing the lessons, that the teacher's approach and pedagogy were key factors in helping the students learn the music concepts and piano skills within a bilingual environment.

**Students' Ways of Learning, Motivation, and Behavior.** Taking into account that the learning process is a two-way road, we also have to analyze this process from the students' perspectives. Their ways and paces of learning, behavior, and motivation are important parts of the learning process as well as their backgrounds and experiences, and the knowledge they bring into the classroom.

Despite limited proficiency in the English language, the students were motivated and excited to learn music and piano skills in a second language. Through lesson observations and analysis of student interviews, I noticed that they were motivated to participate in the lessons just because they love music, they love to play and practice piano skills, and for some of them, they stated that they like the English language. The students' reactions to the music lessons demonstrated that the language of instruction during lessons was not an obstacle (and became secondary by weeks 7 and 8), and the reason for that is because they were all motivated and had joy in learning music and piano skills.

Besides the students' motivation to learn music, they also used body gestures in the classroom as a way to show the teacher that they did not understand his instruction or how to perform an

activity. For example, some students raised their shoulders or opened their arms and hands with palms facing up or made a facial expression showing that they didn't understand instructions given by the teacher. In the small interview transcription below with Student C (assisted by the parent) we verified the use of these body gestures (Interview 2):

Researcher: What do you do when you do not understand an activity? (Student took a little too long to respond. Her father was in the interview helping to translate)

[Student opens her arms and hands facing up, together with a facial expression to show her body gesture to the researcher]

Researcher: Do you do this with your hands?

Student's parent: She makes a face like, "Oh, I don't understand."

Researcher: Oh! She makes a face! That's really good! Why do you do a face?

Student's parent: She says that is her first reaction.

Some students (such as Students B and E) were able to use verbal language for communication with the teacher when they did not understand an activity. However, most of the time, they used short sentences with simple English words (Interview 4):

Researcher: What do you do when you do not understand well, an activity in music class?

Student E: "There was one situation that I did not know the word. And, so, I just said what that word mean? And he said for the meaning of the word.

Besides using body gestures and simple English sentences as a way to overcome difficulties in

language communication, students also used creativity to show their understanding and learning of content taught in the classroom. This was evident in many drawings and colouring activities done by students in their student books. They were also creative during music lessons by expanding proposed activities, adding new elements during games (such as new rhythm notes, rests), and modifying or improving some play-based activities.

They also demonstrated learning and musical awareness by “thinking out loud” and expressed deep insights during some remarkable moments of music lessons.

Student behavior was an important factor to be considered in their learning processes. As the music lessons evolved, rapport between the teacher and students, as well as the establishment of a routine, helped the teacher to manage and to deal with students’ behaviours within the classroom and hence, facilitated their learning. The teacher getting to know the different ways individual students learn as well as their respective learning paces also helped.

Children are naturally spontaneous, curious, and creative. All these characteristics associated with the joy of learning music and piano skills, and the fact that they did not have previous music instruction, contributed to improving the learning process of these students in a second language. They were willing to participate in all activities proposed by the teacher while the curriculum offered music content that could be taught in a kinesthetic, physical, concrete, and fun way.

**Appropriate Curriculum and Assessment in the Classroom.** It is also important to mention here the role of the curriculum used to teach music concepts and piano skills to these students in a bilingual environment. The curriculum was designed especially for these lessons using the outcomes of the Alberta curriculum (Music Program of Study of Alberta Education)



of some major concepts for elementary music in Grades 1 and 2 in public schools. It was suitable for children between the ages of 5 to 9 years old, which made it appropriate to be used in teaching these students in the sense that none of them would feel that the activities and the resources used to teach the curriculum's content would be "baby-ish" or too "kiddy-ish." In general, all the students enjoyed and performed the activities, games, songs, and actions suggested in the curriculum without criticism.

All the music contents and piano skills were outlined in the curriculum. They were structured by level of difficulty (starting from basic concepts to intermediate ones) and suggested to be taught using a kinesthetic approach supported by play-based activities. The curriculum also provided activities that used visual and tactile resources to facilitate the teaching of the music concepts. This structure was beneficial to the learning processes that took place in the classroom.

Although the curriculum is presented in a very visual way, featuring images and pictures to represent several music concepts to facilitate students' learning, it is set, at the same time, in a verbal way. There were many instructions related to the content in the curriculum that were set up to be delivered in a verbal way to students. Over the course of eight weeks of lessons, it was apparent that the teacher made modifications in his delivery of the curricular contents. He aggregated more movements, actions, and use of tactile and visual resources instead of using verbal instructions to teach several concepts included in the curriculum. The teacher stated: "The curriculum was more verbal than the way I used it. Yeah, there is no question. It was more verbal than the way I used it and that was a change that I made" (Teacher's interview).

The assessment of the students' learning was carried out throughout the lessons. The teacher

was constantly evaluating students in general music concepts and abilities to recognize and demonstrate piano concepts and skills. The teacher was not “expecting them to be able to rephrase in their own language. He was interested in what can they do” (Teacher’s interview). He was “often watching to see if they can differentiate this concept from another concept, so can they differentiate a skip from a step? And can they do it quickly?” Thus, the teacher was not only evaluating student’s abilities to do and/or recognize music concepts and piano skills, but also “how far along they are in their ability to do that.” This way, depending on students’ level of learning, the teacher was able to clarify, and/or reinforce the music concepts by doing more activities that helped stretch the students in their musical knowledge and learning.

#### **4.5 Summary**

This qualitative research study was conducted using a case study methodology. The case of this study was a group of six students between the ages of 5 and 9 years old who were newcomer immigrants in Canada with less than two years of residency in the country. They all spoke a language other than English at home and their overall level of proficiency in the English language was limited. The phenomenon studied in this research project was the teaching-learning process of music concepts in a bilingual educational environment.

Three methods of data collection were used during the research process: lesson observations, interviews with the teacher and students, and analyses of the curriculum documents used to teach music contents to this group of students.

Data analysis and interpretation was written in a detailed and descriptive manner and firstly presented in the type they were collected. Following, I performed cross-analysis of all the data which was presented by themes and sub-themes: (1) creativity and curiosity, (2) play-based

activities – Games, music, and movement, and (3) language was not a hindrance. The last theme – Language was not a hindrance - was divided into three sub-themes: (a) Teacher’s approach, pedagogy, and methodology, (b) Students’ ways of learning, motivation, and behavior, and (c) Appropriate curriculum and assessment in classroom.

Based on the findings and analysis that emerged from the collected data, it became apparent that the process of teaching and learning music in bilingual environment depended on three key elements that were essential and interconnected:

- 1) Teacher’s pedagogy, methodology, and approach.
- 2) Students’ ways of learning (which encompass their creativity, curiosity, motivation, and behaviour), and
- 3) The role of well-designed and structured curriculum that contained essential music contents and introductory piano skills aimed to be taught to children between ages from 5 to 9 years old.

The teacher’s pedagogy, methodology, and approach used to teach music concepts and piano skills to these immigrant students were very important and had a huge impact on their learning. The nature of his teaching approach, which was very physical, dynamic, and fun, facilitated that the students could learn music in a second language. He used guided discovery technique in his teaching pedagogy that opened the doors for an unlimited exploration of the music concepts and piano skills improving students’ creativity, curiosity, and expanding their musical learning. The establishment of the class routine, rapport between teacher and students, and the combination of the teacher adjusting his speed of speech with the students becoming accustomed to how he spoke, were important elements that contributed to the students’

learning process.

The students were highly motivated and excited to learn music concepts and piano skills regardless of the language of instruction. Thus, I infer that motivation could be considered as the number one element for them to be willing, open, and interested in learning music and piano skills in a second language. I can also associate the motivation element with the fact that most of the students did not have previous music instruction, at least in the English language. This factor also leads me to infer that the students' learning expectations related mostly to the music concepts taught during lessons was shaped by the teacher, hence, all the class routine as well as the way the teacher delivers and conducts the classes led to the establishment of good rapport between participants.

There is another important factor to be considered in this teaching-learning process in a bilingual environment, which was the natural curiosity and creativity of these children. Students' curiosity helped the teacher to manage students' behaviour during instruction, and thereby support students' learning. The students' creativity was often visible throughout the lessons. Their creativity was expressed in different ways such as through written activities, games, actions, gestures, and body movements. It was clear that students' curiosity and creativity helped them to expand their musical knowledge and improved learning in the classroom.

Lastly, it is important to emphasize the important role of the curriculum used in this study. The curriculum was presented in a very visual way facilitating students' learning and embodiment of the concepts. It explored the music concepts through several activities and using different skills such as drawings, coloring, math skills, movement, and actions which kept students

motivated and engaged during lessons. Learning progress was assessed as an on-going activity throughout the eight weeks of the lessons.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

In this chapter, I provide a discussion of the findings and analysis that emerged from the collected data in my research in relation to the literature from the fields of music education, piano pedagogy, discovery learning technique, and second language education. The discussion is presented in four different themes: (1) Discovery learning pedagogy, (2) Piano teaching and learning, (3) Play-based activities, games, music and movement, and (4) Second language, music, and play.

### **5.1. Discovery Learning Pedagogy**

Based on the findings and analysis that emerged from the data, I noted that the teacher's pedagogy, methodology, and approach to teaching music concepts and piano skills to immigrant students in English were crucial for the learning process that took place in the classroom. Throughout the research lessons, the teacher mostly used Guided Discovery Technique (Bruner, 1961), encouraging and guiding students to explore, create, and discover new music concepts in their learning process. The teacher, in his interview, stated, "I like them to discover the new concept or stumble across it by accident, which I'd accidentally set up, perhaps, rather than introducing it." At the same time, while students were discovering this exploration freely, the teacher was always there guiding them in this endeavor. Even though the teacher thought he was doing discovery learning, clearly, he conducted guided discovery learning with the students during the lessons. The knowledge constructed by the students each week was carefully scaffolded and structured by the teacher. The teacher was a model for the students on many occasions during music lessons: When they were dancing together, doing body movement actions along with songs, and when they were using solfège hand signs. The

students performed many activities and learned music skills and concepts by copying the teacher's body gestures. Methods that offer guided learning suggest that students are free to explore and solve problems within the learning environment, but with the teacher's guidance, which "also provides hints, direction, coaching, feedback, and/or modeling to keep the student on track" (Mayer, 2004, p.15).

While Student E was composing a song using Duplo blocks and alphabet letters in one of the lessons, she was exploring her learned musical knowledge about skips, steps, and the music alphabet. She was creative as she arranged the letters and the blocks in two different ways: Some letters were stacked on top of each other, and some letters were arranged in step/skip patterns. With this arrangement, she was able to create chords and melodies without knowing the proper names in music when the notes are arranged in these two different modes. The teacher was there guiding her in this creative process of her musical composition. He helped her to try playing the piano as she was very curious in listening to it, and how it would sound. The teacher guided Student E in the process of learning how to play the notes she composed and helping her to play the chords using three fingers at the same time on the piano keys. Then, the teacher guided her to play the notes separately, in melody. After this process, the teacher said to Student E that she was creating chords and melodies. According to the teacher, "You explain the concept after they experienced the concept. And then they're putting words to something they're already looking for words." The teacher labeled what Student E made using Duplo blocks and alphabet letters with conventional music terminology. It was noticeable that this activity was based on discovery-guided pedagogy.

The pedagogy employed by the teacher in the aforementioned activity resonates with what Bruner (2006) describes about the discovery learning technique:

The hypothesis that I would propose here is that to the degree that one is able to approach learning as a task of discovering something rather than “learning about” it, to that degree will there be a tendency for the child to carry out his learning activities with the autonomy of self-reward or, more properly by reward that is discovery itself. (p. 61)

Although Mayer (2004) advocates that “guided discovery is effective... and appears to offer the best method for promoting constructivist learning” (pp. 15–17), he suggests that there is a “challenge in teaching by using guided discovery” (p. 17), that is in relation to the amount and kind of guidance provided by the teacher. He argues that “in some cases, direct instruction can promote the cognitive processing needed for constructivist learning, but in others, some mixture of guidance and exploration is needed” (p. 17).

Bruner (1961), who is enthusiastic about discovery methods, advocated that to best employ discovery learning technique, teachers need to give students enough freedom and enough guidance (Mayer, 2004). Freedom enables students to be more cognitively active in their learning processes and the teacher’s guidance provides the knowledge that students construct in their learning environment (Mayer, 2004). Accordingly, Bruner was in favour that students could experience different ways of learning, “communicating and to create a community in which multiple ways of learning take place” (Takaya, 2008, p. 2). He was opposed to the traditional methods of learning applied in schools (Takaya, 2008). During lessons, the teacher used different approaches while he employed the guided discovery technique in his practice. The students experienced different ways of learning through written and drawing activities, body gestures, actions, and movement. The teaching and learning process was also facilitated by using tactile materials including mini toy animals, dynamic dice, heart-shape alphabet letters, Duplo blocks, a floor keyboard, rhythm cards, and percussion instruments. These aids



provided vivid and concrete experience of the music concepts to the students. The students had freedom to experiment and learn the music concepts in multiple ways while they had the teacher's guidance throughout their learning process. Bazy (2019) explains that a music classroom that is centered on the learner shows active music makers and thinkers and produces engagement, vibrancy, and meaningful learning. The role of the teacher shifts from "being 'the sage on the stage' to serving as 'the guide on the side' as students take ownership of their learning" (Bazy, 2019, p. 19). Bazy points out that students learn more when they interact with the environment, developing hands-on experiences in the construction of their knowledge. Therefore, there is an increase in their motivation to learn due to these social interactions that happen within the classroom (Bazy, 2019). Moreover, Kladder (2019) suggests new approaches and techniques for music teaching such as a learner-centered approach in which students can engage in meaningful learning experiences and develop active roles in their own learning processes. A learner-centered classroom is quite different from a teacher-directed classroom. In a teacher-directed classroom, the focus is on the teacher as the primary person who delivers knowledge, while in a learner-centered classroom the focus is on the student who is helped by the teacher in guiding their own learning (Kladder, 2019). In a learner-centered classroom, students socially construct their new knowledge in meaningful ways through active exploration, choice, and autonomy with their peers and teacher in a collaborative space. They are active participants in their learning process and music-making (Kladder, 2019). Conversely, in a teacher-directed classroom "students are kept from engaging in the music-learning experience in ways that encourage ownership and active participation beyond playing an instrument" (Kladder, 2019, p. 5). Accordingly, the teacher dictates the "rules" and makes decisions in the classroom. Unfortunately, this is the culture that dominates our educational

system not in total, but in most classrooms (Kladder, 2019).

One of the characteristics of the discovery technique is the importance given to the role of the teacher compared to the curriculum. The teacher has the flexibility to stray from the curriculum during instruction time. He takes into account the individual ways and paces of learning of each student. According to the teacher, “If something’s not working, I could do it next week,” acknowledging that some activities do not always work with every student in every lesson. He was aware of how each student likes to learn and thus he was able to address the same music concept with a new activity depending on the kinds of activities each student liked the most. He stated: “I don’t feel like I have to do this curriculum today, for any one of them. Because individual instructions, so I don’t have to.” This way, in several lessons, he took different directions in addressing music concepts while he was teaching to the students. He agrees that “some of them (students) respond to certain activities, they like certain activities. And then I’ll do that activity in the thing that they like.” Bruner (1996) advocated the importance of the teacher’s role over the curriculum. According to Bruner (1996), “the system, for example a formal curriculum, becomes less important compared to the role of the teacher, and the actual activities and interactions which take place in the classroom” (Bruner, 1996, p. 85, as cited in Takaya, 2008, p. 16).

Throughout the lessons, it was apparent that the teacher used a guided discovery learning technique in his practice. He offered students the freedom to explore in multiple ways different music concepts and piano skills while he was guiding and scaffolding students’ construction of knowledge in the classroom. He acknowledged that, “the whole approach was discovery learning.” He had content to be taught to students according to the curriculum, but he opted “to teach it with a discovery technique anyway.” He noted, “It wouldn’t really matter what the

curriculum is. That's how I always teach." The students were active participants in their own learning process and together with the teacher they established rapport and created a meaningful learning environment. The students' curiosity, creativity, and motivation helped them to learn music concepts and piano skills through play-based activities and discovery experience. They made musical compositions using Duplo blocks and alphabet letters, arranging them in different ways to make melodies and chords. They also created their own rhythm sequences using the rhythm cards displayed on the blue board and they were able to clap the sequences. They felt proud of their achievements and discoveries. The students experienced a sense of ownership of their learning, thereby demonstrating that "discovery in learning has precisely the effect upon the learner of leading him to be a constructionist" (Bruner, 2006, p. 60).

## **5.2 Piano Teaching and Learning**

One of the most favourite activities mentioned by the students during their interviews was "to play and practice the piano" (Student A). The time to play the piano and to locate the notes on the keyboard garnered students' attention and curiosity. The teacher devoted 15 minutes of each weekly class for teaching piano skills to students. He did not use a traditional piano method for teaching the skills and concepts, instead, he taught the content suggested in the curriculum that was designed for the lessons.

The approach used by the teacher to teach piano skills and content were concrete, visible, and fun for students. The use of tactile resources (toy animals, Duplo blocks, and alphabet letters), play-based activities, as well as the animal stories told by the teacher and extended by the students, helped in the teaching and learning of the piano skills and content. Sezen (2021) recommends that piano teachers who work with preschool children (the age group of 4 to 6

years old) make use of resources that are visual to apply “creative pedagogical teaching activities” (p. 310). In this way, the teacher has the opportunity to make the students’ learning processes more efficient and productive (Sezen, 2021). The author points out that the teaching and learning of piano skills to preschool children requires students to gather and understand information about music concepts such as “volume and tone of sound, directions of notes (high and low), two different staves and clefs, and rhythm” (Sezen, 2021, p. 311). Piano education in these early ages should involve games, activities, and individual methods that best suit each child depending on their developmental stages, talents, and skills for music. Repetition and revision of music concepts, games, and learning activities are also recommended so that the student can develop proper skills of note-reading (Sezen, 2021). Sezen states that “games help children to find solutions to their problems by trial and error, and improve risk-taking experience of children” (Sezen, 2021, p. 311). They also offer playful and enjoyable moments between the teacher and student.

In this study, the teacher introduced the groups of two and three black keys on the piano to the students by telling them stories involving animals. Sezen (2021) reinforces that teachers should constantly make use of visual materials, storytelling, games, and repetition of activities and concepts learned in every lesson. Regarding the introduction of the black keys on the piano keyboard to the students, the reviewed literature suggests that teachers introduce these keys “by explaining them verbally and also by telling students as a story” (Sezen, 2021, p. 320). Sezen (2021) reinforces that the teaching of notes to children in their early ages should integrate visual, acoustic, and psychomotor skills by using creative games, and materials appropriate to the children’s developmental stages.

Gouzouasis and Ryu (2015) advocate for the importance of play and the meaning of it in piano

teaching and learning. They point out that by using the pedagogy of play, the piano teacher can “encourage students to develop a lifelong enjoyment of playing the piano” (p. 406). The authors reaffirm the importance of the stories that are told by students and teachers during music lessons (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2015). They stress that teachers must be mindful and skillful in how to listen to students’ stories. It is during these conversations between teachers and students that their creativity, emotions, and feelings are explored, framing students’ learning as fun, joyful, and playful. Gouzouasis and Ryu (2015) note that “valuing and validating the child’s ideas, their conversations about life and music, and musical expressions are equally important” (p. 410). Therefore, the piano teacher has “the responsibility to support students’ creativity and curiosity” in their process of learning music and piano skills (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2015, p. 410). This requires teachers to be empathetic, caring, loving, and respectful of students.

Advocacy for listening and valuing the students’ stories during piano instruction as “listening as a pedagogy” (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2015, p. 410), resonates with Ryu (2018), who points out the importance of taking into account the lived experiences, previous knowledge, creativity, emotions, and stories that students bring to their piano lessons. When the teacher validates students’ previous experiences, piano learning can become meaningful and joyful (Ryu, 2018). This was noted during piano instruction with Student D, when he expanded the teacher’s animal stories related to learning the piano notes. Student D was creative in making new stories with the animals because it was something that he learned at home; he liked the subject of animals and connected them to learning the notes on the piano. Student D’s lived experience of learning about animals at home inspired him to be creative while learning the piano notes using toy animals on the keyboard and making up stories with the animals. He demonstrated joy and

engagement using these tactile resources.

The students in this study demonstrated motivation and sentiments of joy in learning general music concepts and introductory piano skills. During an interview with Student E, I asked the question, “Do you like music lessons in English and why”? And she responded, “Yes, because I just like music lessons on the piano.” She also acknowledged that the teacher helped her to learn music and piano skills in a second language “by having me to the piano,” and because the activities performed in the classroom “were fun.” The students’ motivation, curiosity, and creativity demonstrated during piano learning were taken into consideration by the teacher. He also used the piano as a resource for playing the game “race to the piano,” which the students liked to play. There were moments of joy and fun for both the teacher and his students.

Accordingly, the teacher demonstrated empathy with the students, doing the activities that each of them liked (by respecting each individual’s way and pace of learning), and furthermore taking into account the students’ motivations for learning piano skills. The students’ motivations were prioritized by the teacher in piano instructions (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2015).

The insights, ideas, and stories told by the students were often heard by the teacher during the lessons. Bazy (2019) recommends teachers to be aware and empathetic to students’ ideas and insights which are usually very inspiring and unexpected. The teacher demonstrated interest and was attentive to “inspirational moments” and knew how “to nurture their imagination and curiosities” (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2015, p. 410). Moreover, the teacher and students established a good relationship with which they developed a meaningful, joyful, and playful environment for teaching and learning music concepts and piano skills. The literature on piano teaching and learning asserts that it is valuable to create a positive relationship between teachers and students, wherein students can find a “supportive and encouraging environment” for learning.

It may contribute to the students' "continuation of piano lessons" (Costa-Giomi, Flowers, & Sasaki, 2005, as cited in Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2015, p. 398).

The teaching and learning of piano skills in this study was centered on the students, taking into account their creativity, curiosity, motivation, insights, stories, and lived experiences. The piano concepts were taught in playful ways and through movement. First, the students experienced (by manipulating tactile materials) and embodied (by moving, looking at the teacher's actions and copying the teacher's gestures) the concepts to apply to the piano. The approach to teaching piano was not based on traditional piano methods or on a technique-oriented approach. The teaching and learning process of piano skills was a creative and joyful experience for both teacher and students (Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2015).

### **5.3 Play-Based Activities, Games, Music and Movement**

The music concepts addressed in the curriculum designed for this study were supported by play-based activities, games, music, and movement. The use of extra resources such as Duplo blocks, mini toy animals, heart-shape alphabet letters, a floor keyboard, dynamic dice, rhythm cards, and percussion instruments, facilitated the teaching and learning of music concepts during this study. The curriculum was designed using the outcomes of the Alberta curriculum (Music Program of Study of Alberta Education) of some major concepts for elementary music in Grades 1 and 2 in public schools.

Students demonstrated joy while performing activities during the lessons. They had lots of fun in dancing, singing, and doing actions along with songs with the teacher while copying his gestures and movements. In one of the interviews, Student D declared that he liked "dancing the symbols" of the "Tony Chestnut" and "Bounce High" songs. Thus, through dancing,

moving, and signing with their hands, the students learned about musical pitches: sol, la, and mi. They also learned to name body parts from the “Tony Chestnut” song (toe-knee-chest-head), and short and long rhythm sounds (Ta’s and Ta-oo’s).

Lindeman (2018) explains that the learning of music helps “children grow in the three domains of learning: Cognitive, psychomotor, and affective” (p. 22). Children can express themselves through a variety of music activities as they engage in making music. According to Lindeman (2018), “learning seems to be most effective when a concept is experienced through several modes: aural, motor, visual, tactile, and verbal” (p. 22). Children are naturally creative and express their feelings, imagination, and ideas with ease. When they are engaged in music experiences, they become actively involved with music elements such as melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre, and dynamics (Lindeman, 2018). These music experiences help children to develop “their aural perception and sensitivity” (Lindeman, 2018, p. 27).

The teacher must provide different opportunities to children to experience musical sounds before introducing the skills of reading and notating music. Lindeman (2018) suggests that “notation should be presented only when children have an immediate musical need to use it and when it is considered to be developmentally appropriate” (p. 28). Instead, “pictures focus their attention and provide a visual as they follow the beats” (p. 28). It is also recommended that before introducing informal notation to children, teachers must make use of hand signs and motions (Lindeman, 2018). Lindeman (2018) reinforces that teachers must select repertoire that contain easy songs that children can perform using physical movements such as dancing, clapping, and showing pitch levels with their hands and bodies. Lindeman’s (2018) assertion resonates with the teacher’s approach in this study as well as how the music content and piano skills in the curriculum were presented to the students. The content was presented in a very



visual way through pictures and images in the student books. The pictures of the animals helped the students to locate the notes on the piano keys and kept their focus, enabling the students to play the melodies with ease on the piano. The students also recognized the low and high pitches of the songs through several images drawn in their student books and moved their hands by looking at the pictures for hand signs (mi, sol, la).

Studies in the literature show that children learn more when they move, embody, and feel the music. A holistic learning approach that integrates movement, thinking, and feeling provides a sense of well-being and self-worth in students besides the learning of music itself (Glover & Young, 1998). The feelings of joy and fun were noted by me while Student E skipped and stepped on the “keys” of the floor keyboard: “Student E tries the floor keyboard. She suggests to skip and step on the tune of ‘Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.’ The teacher plays the music on the piano, and the student skips and steps on the floor keyboard. They had fun together” (Observation notes - Lesson 8). Student A also expressed sentiments of fun and well-being during his interview when he mentioned the game, “Racing to Piano,” which was one of his favourite games to play in music lessons: “I can run, and run is an exercise.” The aforementioned examples demonstrated that the students enjoyed the activities in which they could move, run, dance, and sing. They learned music concepts through physical, active, and fun ways. Music and movement are natural activities for children. Their bodies respond freely to music and thus the sense of well-being is gained. As these bodily responses become more conscious to children, their awareness of the self also increases (Aronoff, 1988). Movement is integral in music-learning experiences. Movement “contributes to a child’s physical development and helps them understand concepts about music.” It also “encourages creativity and imagination through interpretation of music” (Lindeman, 2018, p. 31).

From the teacher's perspective, it was visible that his physical approach to teaching the music concepts facilitated students' learning processes. He declared "I like them to move around the classroom," demonstrating that he was in favour of an active and engaged mode of teaching. Generally, during the lessons, he introduced a new music concept by first making the students experience it (by dancing, moving, or playing with the tactile materials) and then later explained the concepts to students. In this way, he gave the students the opportunity for them to embody, feel, and experience the music concepts before naming them. The learning process was vivid and concrete to the students and the teacher embraced a holistic approach to teach music, thus facilitating students' learning of music's elements (Wiggins & Espeland, 2012).

Besides the activities that involved games, actions, and movements, there were also activities based on play. The students were very much engaged in manipulating the Duplo blocks, creating their "stairs" of notes in skip or step patterns. They used the heart-shaped alphabet letters and mini toy animals on top of these blocks after they had "built" the stairs to represent the note sequences. The rhythm cards were also very useful, enabling the students to create their own rhythmic sequences. According to each note's stem direction, the students and teacher flipped the cards, choosing which hand to tap (right or left) or which foot to walk with (hopping movement). They also used the percussion instruments to help them to play the sequences they created with the rhythm cards.

The teacher enhanced students' musical learning experience by facilitating playful activities. Van and Excell (2018) note that a "well-considered music education input, which is both interactive and innovative, offers a viable way to enhancing a playful approach to teaching and learning in the early years" (p. 9). They stress that a well-supported and collaborative learning environment and a teacher with good knowledge about music content that can be taught

through playful activities “engage children joyfully through a sound pedagogy of play” (Van & Excell, 2018, p. 9).

Van & Excell (2018) note the importance the teacher having good knowledge in the subject of music as well as methodologies (Shulman & Shulman, 2011, as cited in Van & Excell, 2018, p. 1). The success of any music education program depends not only on the methodologies, techniques, and approaches used by the teacher but also on students’ previous musical experiences, interests, motivations, and engagement in the learning environment. Any methodology, technique, and approach used by the teacher in the music classroom will only be effective to enhance students’ learning if the teacher has knowledge of “what is to be taught, and confidence about how it is to be taught” (Costanza & Russell, 2012, p. 262). The role of the music teacher is to ensure an inclusive learning environment taking into account students’ interests and identifying individual needs in the context of the group (Zeserson, 2012).

Decisions on teaching strategies must consider the curricular content, pedagogical approaches, and carefully consider students’ interests. The way that teachers teach and what they teach are influenced by their own previous experiences as musicians (Zeserson, 2012). Students are more likely to flourish in their musical learning when their teachers encourage experiences, questions, and exploration within the classroom, taking into account everyone’s needs and interests (Zeserson, 2012).

A newer trend in music education places values on individual needs, ideas, and feelings in the context of the group. Teachers must focus on the students’ social and emotional development (Zeserson, 2012). Teachers who provide a creative and inclusive learning environment value students’ voices and choices. The “activities and goals are more likely to be driven by the learner-participants rather than the teacher-leader.” According to Zeserson (2012), the “focus is

on creative processes rather than instructional or technical ones” (p. 211). In this study, the students were creative and very motivated to learn music concepts and piano skills. Through play –based activities, games, and movements, they expanded several activities proposed by the teacher during the music lessons bringing their previous knowledge, interests, and creativity to the classroom. The teaching and learning process was centered on the students and their ideas, curiosity, and creativity were valued and taken into account by the teacher.

Kladder (2019) explains that teachers need to change their ways of thinking and to reflect on their philosophical stances “regarding what constitutes good teaching” (pp. 6-7). He advises that teachers should “not focus entirely on final performance, but value student input and opinions” (Kladder, 2019, p.7). They also should encourage students to take risks, to engage in social learning, explore their new musical creations by doing, exploring, and learning from mistakes and successes (Kladder, 2019). Creativity is highly supported in a learner-centered classroom. Likewise, students’ ideas, interests, insights, and prior knowledge are “considered, valued, and included in the learning process” (Kladder, 2019, p. 9). The teacher is a facilitator providing guidance, different resources, and opportunities for students to be active participators, in order to help them in their process of new knowledge creation. It is vital that teachers consider students’ musical experiences and ideas as they can help teachers to inform and guide music learning (Kladder, 2019). According to Kladder (2019), students are “curious, knowledgeable, and often enthusiastic to learn new skills and concepts” (p. 9).

In addition, to achieve a successful level of music teaching, teachers must also be knowledgeable about students’ learning processes (Wiggins & Espeland, 2012). The teacher in this study took into account the students’ respective ways and paces of learning. He was also aware of the kinds of activities that each student liked to play during the lessons: “some of

them respond to certain activities, they like certain activities.” The teacher’s attitude towards students’ learning processes resonates with Harwood and Marsh (2012) in that they advocate for considering students’ musical interests in the learning process, thus making learning holistic instead of analytical.

The growth of a good rapport between the teacher and students, a supportive and fun learning environment, and the establishment of a class routine contributed to the teacher and students learning together. The play-based activities were designed to be student-centered and they learned music concepts through actions, movements, games, and by using tactile materials. Most of the activities were performed together with the teacher and students interacting with each other. The teacher’s approach, “through the adoption of playful but meaningful teaching strategies based on the children’s interests” (Van & Excell, 2018, p. 3), contributed to the learning of the music concepts by the students.

The literature in children’s cognitive development shows that children “learn through active participation and exploration of their environment” (Piaget, 1997, as cited in Van & Excell, 2018, p. 4). The teacher in this study provided diverse musical experiences to the students through dancing and singing songs in different ways (fast and slow tempos, quiet and loud dynamics), playing rhythm sequences using percussion instruments, and manipulating tactile materials to understand and learn music concepts. The students fully experienced and embodied these concepts. Likewise, by providing rich musical experiences, the teacher contributed to the optimizing of the cognitive development of the students (Taggart & Gouzouasis, 1995). According to Van & Excell (2018), children must experience different ways of learning. The teaching and learning process is optimized when teachers “incorporate visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic strategies to provide vividly experiential opportunities

for advancing music and non-music ability” in students (Brown, 2013, as cited in Van & Excell, 2018, p. 4).

#### **5.4 Second Language, Music, and Play**

In this study, the fact of having students with limited proficiency in English and a teacher who speaks only English created a unique and interesting situation for me to understand the process of teaching and learning music concepts in a bilingual educational environment. It was evident language was a barrier of communication for the students at the commencement of the lessons, but it did not deter their motivation. Instead, the students were always motivated and happy to participate in the lessons each week. They expressed feelings of joy for music during their interviews, and the reasons they cited were because they like music, playing and practicing piano, and they like the English language. During lessons, they used strategies and skills to communicate with the teacher such as body gestures, facial expressions, creativity in their paper-based activities (by drawing, colouring, and writing in their student books) and using simple English words and sentences.

The relationship between music and language is widely debated in the literature because they have a close relationship. According to Rodriguez-Bonces (2017) “the relationship between music and language has to do with motivation, development of concepts, learning environments, and creativity” (p. 207). Rodriguez-Bonces (2017) explains that children love music, and this is a key factor of motivation for them to learn a second language. Previous studies recognize the benefits of using music in the foreign language classroom in many aspects such as language acquisition and skills, motivational and cultural aspects, as well as the capacity that music has to create a fun, relaxing, and enjoyable learning environment (Degrave,

2019).

Studies in the field of music and second language education demonstrate that there are similarities between music and language. The reviewed literature showed that both music and language share some cognitive functions and that music has “the power to teach a second language such as Spanish and English through the use of vocal texts” (Hadi-Tabassum, 2006, p. 222). Fonseca & Gant (2016) also recognize “the affective power of music and words” (Fonseca & Gant, 2016, p. 2), the benefits of music in second language acquisition, and the effect of music and language in human well-being (Fonseca & Gant, 2016). They point out that music can improve linguistic cognitive processes and provide emotional elements that facilitate language learning (Fonseca & Gant, 2016). During music lessons, the students demonstrated happiness, motivation, joy, and a willingness to perform the activities. The feeling of well-being was expressed by some students during their interviews: “I can run, and run is an exercise” (Student A), “I like music lessons in the piano” (Student E), and “I like the symbols of ‘Tony Chestnut’ and ‘Bounce High’ songs” (Student D), affirming the aforementioned statement of Fonseca & Gant (2016). The emotional element that music provided to the students was also noted by me during lesson observations when Student D exclaimed: “The low sound of this black key on the piano is dark” (observation notes - Lesson 1). He was referring to the very low “A” note (single black key) on the left side of the keyboard. The low sound of this note may have triggered a dark emotion for Student D.

Hadi-Tabassum (2006) also recognizes that music can provide cognitive, emotional, and social benefits to children. Besides the gloomy feeling of the “dark” sound of the low A note as commented by Student D, I also observed that students felt more comfortable using English as their second language during the action songs as the lessons progressed. Student D declared

that he liked the symbols (gestures) of the songs for “Tony Chestnut” and “Bounce High.” He liked to dance along to these songs and at the same time, do the actions: touching his head, chest, toes, knees, and so on. The students were also able to sing the English words and names of the body parts of these songs while they were dancing. In one of the lesson observations, I noted that “Student E remembered the song ‘Star light, Star bright’ and she sang the lyrics of the song while doing the hand signs” (Observation notes – lesson 2). This demonstrated that the students were more confident in using the English language through music (Hadi-Tabassum, 2006). Van & Excell (2018) also note that teaching through music enhances language acquisition, math skills, and improves social and emotional connections in the early years of children.

Play was an evident activity throughout the music lessons. The teacher offered several activities based on play to teach the music concepts and piano skills to the students. Through a playful approach, he taught the concepts in a fun, active, physical, and engaged way. In the reviewed literature, several studies demonstrate that “young children learn best through playful approaches towards teaching and learning” (Moyles, 2010; Riley 2007, as cited in Van & Excell, 2018, p. 1). Playful activities are also mentioned as an efficient approach towards second language acquisition. Alinte (2013) refers to activities such as music and play that promote a fun atmosphere in the classroom as good resources in the teaching and learning of a second language. Bruner (2006) points out that play and second language learning have an intrinsic relation. He states that “its structured interactions and ‘rules’ precede and are a part of the child’s first mastery of language” (p. 166). Grazzani, Ilaria, and Jens Brockmeier (2019) also noted the importance of play in second language acquisition: “Bruner (2006) demonstrated that language proliferates when children take part in interactive situations, most of which are



playful” (Grazzani, Ilaria, and Jens Brockmeier, 2019, p. 609).

In this study, Student D was one amongst the group who had good English comprehension. At home, he spoke Hindi and English, and he was very creative and outgoing during music lessons. His creativity led him, several times, to expand on the teacher’s proposed activities and to create new games in the classroom. It was apparent that the “language proliferated” (Grazzani, Ilaria, & Jens Brockmeier, 2019, p. 609) in the fun interactions between the teacher and Student D.

### **5.5 Summary**

After analyzing and interpreting the data in this study, it became apparent to me that the process of teaching and learning music concepts in a second language environment happened due to the (i) teacher’s pedagogy, methodology, and approach, (ii) students’ ways of learning, and (iii) the well-designed curriculum. The teacher used guided discovery pedagogy throughout the study lessons. He led the students through free exploration of the music concepts while he guided them throughout their learning process, scaffolding the new knowledge constructed in the classroom. He was flexible in following the curriculum at the delivery of the contents as he took into account the students’ respective ways and paces of learning. The students explored the music concepts and piano skills through discovery learning. They manipulated tactile materials that supported and stimulated their creativity. They created their own note patterns (steps and skips), chords, melodies, animal stories, and rhythm patterns. The students’ construction of knowledge was concrete, visible, and closely related to their lived experiences. They were “active participants of their own learning” and thus made the “lessons meaningful” (Takaya, 2008, p. 7).

The teacher's pedagogy - the activities based on play, games, music, and movement – was key factor that contributed to the students' learning of the music concepts and piano skills. The students were highly motivated in performing the activities and to learn new music and piano concepts. They were also naturally curious about the learning environment, the percussion instruments, songs, games, hand signs, and action dances. Play-based activities kept students engaged, active, and motivated throughout the study lessons. It was noticeable in every lesson that both the teacher and the students had lots of fun and joyful moments in their interactions while playing games, manipulating the tactile materials, dancing, singing, and playing piano and percussion instruments. The teacher's whole approach actively engaged the students in multiple musical experiences. He provided an engaged and motivated learning environment to the students and took into account their musical interests, previous knowledge, and ways of learning (Temmerman, 2000). Moreover, practical musical activities and a supportive educational environment are key factors for students' success (Temmerman, 2000).

The music concepts and piano skills outlined in the curriculum and taught to the students in this study were age appropriate for this age group (students between the ages of 5 to 9 years old). The activities, songs, and dances suggested in the curriculum were widely accepted by the students without hesitation. The reviewed literature shows that music teachers must take into account the developmental stages of children so that the choice of songs and the plan of lessons are “developmentally appropriate for the students” (Allen, 1992, p. 25). Certainly, this is a key element in the teacher's lesson plans. Therefore, music learning is facilitated and hence students should enjoy music (Allen, 1992).

The time to learn piano skills garnered attention and these were always joyful moments for the students. The teaching and learning of the piano skills was not based in traditional piano

methods or a technique-oriented approach. The piano skills and music concepts were first embodied and experienced by the students through music and movement, play-based activities, visible and tactile resources. Later, the students were led and guided by the teacher in applying these skills to the piano. The teaching and learning of piano was playful and fun as the students used the toy animals on the keyboard and placed them on the appropriate keys. The students associated the note names of the keys with the stories told by the teacher. The piano keyboard became truly a “forest” with its “black trees” and “animals.” The students were also able to create their own stories using the animal toys on the keyboard. Due to previous knowledge and interest about the subject of animals such as Student D presented in the classroom, the students were able to create stories using these tactile resources. Their interests, motivations, creativity, and natural curiosity facilitated the learning of piano skills and thus made the lessons meaningful and playful. The teacher demonstrated empathy while he was listening to the students’ creative animal stories during piano instruction. He was aware of students’ interests, ideas, and creativity, not only in music, but also in their lives (Gouzouasis, & Ryu, 2015).

At the commencement of the lessons, the English language was a barrier between the teacher and students in the classroom, but at the same time, it was a subject that they liked as declared by Student C in her interview. The students did not demonstrate, at any time, sentiments of frustration for not having understood some of the teacher’s instructions related to the activities. Instead, they were all motivated and willing to learn the music concepts and piano skills. Motivation was the number one factor for them to overcome the second language challenges in the classroom. During music lessons the teacher and students communicated using simple English words and sentences that were mostly repeated every week. The teacher declared that “there was a lot of physical, there weren’t a lot of words... basically, they (students) could

learn everything by ear, and by the symbols, and it wasn't much that was English specific" (Teacher's interview). Therefore, I suspect that the teacher's physical and holistic approach that included play-based activities, music and movement, and games, contributed (and it was absolutely critical) to the learning of the music concepts by the students and helped them to overcome the challenges and barriers of the language. Likewise, the teacher demonstrated awe, during his interview, regarding the learning progress of the students: "these students were so impressive, what they were able to do at the end was surprising to me."

The reviewed literature in the field of music education recommends that music teachers must be mindful of "what musical experiences we choose to offer our students" (Harwood & Marsh, 2012, p. 322), by considering students' music interests, their lived experiences, previous knowledge, and ways of learning. In this study, the teacher provided multiple experiences to the students and fostered musical learning and creativity in a holistic way. Together, the teacher and students developed an engaged, fun, and motivated learning environment wherein they experienced music through dancing, singing, manipulating multiple percussion instruments and tactile materials. Music education in this study involved much physicality and different means to experiment. The students worked with this "wide palette, which is nonverbal, basically" (teacher's interview) and thus contributed to the students learning music and piano skills despite the language of instruction. On the other hand, while students were singing, dancing, and playing in the classroom, they were also able to learn some musical terminology, body part names, and "simple English as words were repeated every week" (teacher's interview). It appeared to me that the learning of music facilitated second language acquisition to these students as well. Alinte (2013) states that "Children have an amazing ability to absorb language through play, music, jokes or anything which they can find

enjoyable” (p. 8). Moreover, the literature shows that “listening to songs and singing can facilitate verbal learning and memory” besides to support many “foreign language skills” (Ludke et al., 2013, p. 43).

It is also seen in the literature that music education is recognized by “its cognitive, social and emotional benefits” (Hadi-Tabassum, 2006, p. 220) and that music is a powerful tool to the teaching and learning of a second language (Akhtar et al., 2013; Alinte, 2013; Busse et al., 2018; Degrave, 2019; Fonseca & Gant, 2016; Hadi-Tabassum, 2006; Kovacikova, 2018; Lowe, 1995, 1998, 2002; Ludke et al., 2012, 2013; Medina, 2002; Rukholm et al., 2018). However, very little is known about the teaching and learning of music concepts in a second language environment when the aim of the students’ learning outcome is the music itself.

The purpose of my study was to understand how the process of teaching and learning music concepts happens in a bilingual environment having the music as the main outcome of the students’ learning. The students’ group in this study had limited proficiency in the English language, and the teacher solely spoke English. The findings and then the analysis and interpretation of the data, showed that the teacher’s pedagogy, methodology, and approach were crucial factors for the students’ learning to occur. Through holistic and physical teaching approaches associated with guided discovery pedagogy, the teacher taught the music concepts and piano skills in an engaged, fun, active, and motivated way. The language of instruction became secondary and ceased to be a barrier by weeks 7 and 8 of the lessons. The students learned the music concepts and piano skills through play-based activities, games, music and movement, and tactile resources. There was more music language (audio songs, symbols, music terminologies) than spoken language in the classroom. The English words and sentences used during instructions were simple and mostly repeated every week.

The students were highly motivated and happy taking the music lessons. They expressed feelings of joy for music, piano practice, and in some cases, for the English language. In their learning processes, they used lots of creativity and strategies to learn the music concepts and piano skills in order to overcome the challenges and barriers of the language. Through discovery learning, creativity, and their natural curiosity, the students were “active participants of their own learning” (Takaya, 2008, p. 7). They created their own rhythm and note patterns, chords, melodies, and new stories using the tactile materials. With the establishment of the class routines and the growth of rapport between the teacher and the students as the lessons progressed, they both enjoyed a highly motivated learning environment where the process of teaching and learning was meaningful and joyful.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

My research attempted to understand how the teaching and learning process of music and piano concepts happen in a bilingual environment when the children had not yet mastered the second language. The focus of this inquiry was on the music subject as the students’ learning outcomes.

In order to understand this phenomenon, the research was conducted through the methodology of a single case study. The case was a group of immigrant children who lived in Canada for less than two years and spoke other languages than English at home. They had limited proficiency in the English language and their ages varied from 5 to 9 years old. The teacher, who was a volunteer in this study, was born in Canada and only spoke English. The music lessons took place in a private music studio in the city of Calgary, Alberta. We had a total of eight weeks of lessons, once a week for thirty minutes.

Through a well-designed curriculum drawn from the Music Program of Study from Alberta Education, the students learned major music concepts that are taught in Grades 1 and 2 in elementary public schools in Alberta, Canada. In this study, the students learned music and piano concepts through multiple ways: Play-based activities, music and movement, discovery learning, hand signs, and games. They were highly motivated to participate in the music lessons as they demonstrated in their interviews and class observations that they liked music, practicing and playing the piano, and the English language. Their natural curiosity, creativity, and motivation were key elements that facilitated their learning processes of the music concepts. The language of instruction and communication was a barrier for them at the commencement of the lessons, but it became secondary as the lessons progressed due to the establishment of the class routine, classroom work rules, and rapport between the teacher and students. The English language was used simply; sentences were short and repeated weekly.

The teacher used guided discovery pedagogy in his practice throughout the lessons. He encouraged students to explore and discover the music concepts freely in the classroom by using their creativity, imagination, curiosity, and motivation. At the same time, while the students explored the music and piano concepts through play-based activities, music and movement, hand signs, and games, the teacher guided their discoveries and scaffolded the students' construction of knowledge. His teaching practice was student-centered and they became active participants of their own learning processes. The use of a physical approach to teaching music through movement, games, and action songs enabled students to embody and experience the music concepts in a fun and joyful way. The students experienced the music and piano concepts in concrete, tactile, and vivid modes, which facilitated their learning and understanding. The teacher also used several strategies to facilitate the instruction of activities

and verbal communication between himself and the students. The use of body gestures and facial expressions helped the teacher to explain to students some piano skills, such as proper hand positions on the keyboard. He also used his body to physically demonstrate and explain the music concepts of steps and skips when he went up and down on the staircases in the hallway of the studio. To facilitate instruction of the activities he used the strategy of rephrasing sentences, making instructions much simpler so the students could understand the activities easily. Likewise, English words were used in a very simple way with short sentences and repeated every week. He also slowed down the pace of his speech by week 6 of the lessons. This was possible after he mastered the curriculum, developed a good rapport with the students, and established the class routine. By weeks 7 and 8 of the lessons, the language was no longer a barrier for both the teacher and the students. Everything was in place in the classroom and the participants (both the teacher and the students) knew what to expect from each other in terms of class routine, class work, development of the activities, and the learning of piano and music concepts.

The reviewed literature on the fields of music and second language demonstrate that there are similarities between music and language (Busse et al., 2018; Fonseca & Gant, 2016; Hadi-Tabassum, 2006; Kovacikova, 2018; Lowe, 1995; Ludke et al., 2012, 2013; Milovanov & Tervaniemi, 2007; Moreno et al., 2015; Rukholm et al., 2018) and that music is a powerful tool to the teaching and learning of a second language (Akhtar et al., 2013; Alinte, 2013; Busse et al., 2018; Degrave, 2019; Fonseca & Gant, 2016; Hadi-Tabassum, 2006; Kovacikova, 2018; Lowe, 1995, 1998, 2002; Ludke et al., 2012, 2013; Medina, 2002; Rukholm et al., 2018). However, little is known about the process of teaching and learning music concepts in a bilingual environment when the focus of the students' learning outcomes is the music.



My research focused on the teaching and learning of music concepts in a second language and it demonstrated that it is possible for children to learn music in a bilingual environment when they have not yet mastered the second language. The students' natural curiosity, creativity, and motivation associated with the whole teaching approach and pedagogy of the teacher were key elements and contributed to the students' learning of the piano and music concepts. According to Lowe (2002), teaching and pedagogical strategies are key factors for the students' learning success. Ludke and Weinmann (2012) believe that music has the potential to motivate and inspire students to learn a new language while they develop musical skills. Teachers who provide a variety of musical experiences to their students are also strengthening their "musicianship and cultivating their musical interests and skills" (p. 31). The reviewed literature focused on second-language acquisition through the use of music as a teaching and learning tool. The importance of an effective teaching practice is reinforced by Medina (2002) who points out that if the teachers "fail to combine music and pedagogy in the second language classroom, students may be not fully benefited from the potentially powerful effects which music can have upon language acquisition" (p. 6). Although songs are enjoyable, it is essential that teachers combine the teaching of songs with effective instructional practices (Medina, 2002). Taking into account the similarities that exist between language and music, Ludke and Weinmann (2012) believe that the students' learning outcomes in both disciplines can be reached when the teachers apply proper pedagogical approaches to language and music. According to Lowe (1998), "researchers in second-language education (Arellano & Draper, 1975; Claerr & Gargon, 1984; Dominguez, 1991; de Frece, 1995; Eterno, 1961; Failoni, 1993; Foster, 1993; Jolly, 1975; Little, 1983; Lozanov & Gateva, 1988) suggest that the incorporation of music into a second-language is a viable teaching strategy and should be considered.

However, none of these studies considered such an interdisciplinary approach on music learning” (p. 34). Likewise, Salcedo (2002) suggests that there are advantages to learning music in the early years of childhood as it might help in the learning of both musical and language skills. The literature also demonstrates the benefits of incorporating music and songs into the foreign language curriculum as a pedagogical strategy to “reinforce comprehension and acquisition of language patterns” (Salcedo, 2002, p. 80). Music is beneficial for the acquisition of a second language and should not be seen as merely as a “fun activity” in the foreign language classroom (Degrave, 2019, p. 418).

Besides the benefits of using music as a viable teaching and learning strategy in the acquisition of second language skills, the literature also shows that music provides great benefits in the emotional, psychological, and well-being states of the students. Busse et al. (2018) point out that it is not only important to find effective strategies to teach a second language to migrated children (who have recently migrated to a different country other than their home country) as well as to support their emotional, motivational, and psychological well-being. They state that “singing can have a positive effect in well-being” as well as “support language learning processes” (p.1). This assertion aligns with the teaching approach used by the teacher in this study. While the teacher applied strategies to teach music in English to these immigrant children, the students also learned some English words through the songs, dances, and actions. In addition, the teacher provided a supportive and fun learning environment that contributed in a positive way to the well-being of the students. They felt welcomed and motivated to learn music in a second language. The positive effects of singing on language learning is demonstrated in the literature as musical activities being considered fun and enjoyable, thus positively influencing students’ behavior, motivation, and language acquisition (Busse et al.,

2018). During the students' interviews they revealed that they took pleasure and had fun in the music activities performed during the lessons. They liked to sing the songs while moving their hands (signs for mi-sol-la pitches), dancing and doing the gestures for body parts, and playing the racing to the piano game. They really enjoyed the music and piano activities which positively influenced their behaviour and motivation to learn music. Fernandez-Garcia and Fonseca-Mora (2019) also recognize that music plays "an important role in foreign language learning" as it "affects cognitive aspects such as memory and attention" as well as "induces complex emotions and leads to strong emotional experiences" (pp. 127-128). This statement of Fernandez-Garcia and Fonseca Mora (2019) is relevant to my study as I noted during lesson observations how much and how quickly the students memorized some songs' lyrics (such as "Star light, Star bright") and hand signs in few weeks of lessons. A "dark" feeling of the low A note sound on the piano was evoked in Student D's emotion. This student's insight was noted during my lesson observations as well.

Moreover, Charalambous and Yerosimou (2015) highlight the benefits of music as a means to teach language and other subject areas and its importance in the classroom including improvement of students' attention and focus, creation of a positive environment and enhancement of students "attitudes toward content and learning" (p. 376). The findings of my research align with the statement of Charalambous and Yerosimou (2015). Play-based activities, games, music and movement were essential in maintaining each student's focus and attention during music lessons in addition to creating a fun and relaxed learning environment toward students' music learning. The racing to the piano game was one of the students' favourite activities and was an effective way for the teacher to keep students motivated and focused during lessons. Music can reduce anxiety in foreign language performance and

learning, it lowers stress levels, and provides a relaxing learning environment, improving positive feeling in students towards learning a second language (Degrave, 2019). Music has the power to offer successful collaboration among students and enhance social interactions within the classroom. According to Ludke and Weinmann (2012) music also can enhance students' self-esteem. It is considered an excellent vehicle to create social relations (Good & Russo, 2016). Undoubtedly, the teacher's approach, pedagogy, and all the music activities (games, songs, dances, movements) performed during the lessons provided a meaningful, relaxed, and positive classroom environment for the students to learn music and piano content as well as some English words, in addition to enhancing the interactions between the teacher and students.

Another key element that contributed to the students' learning of music and piano concepts in this study was the opportunity they had to embody and experience the concepts through multiple ways of learning. The teacher provided different activities through songs, games, movements, and play-based activities so the students could fully experience and embody all kinds of music and different music concepts. By providing rich musical experiences, music teachers are contributing to optimizing the cognitive development of children (Taggart & Gouzouasis, 1995). Likewise, Zimmerman (1984) found that individuals develop musical intelligence through interaction with music and environmental sounds.

Ludke and Weinmann (2012) recommend that teachers take into account students' ways and paces of learning, and students' ideas in the learning process when they are planning musical activities for them. This way, the teacher is able to keep motivation among students in addition to provide a positive learning environment. It is also important that teachers foster "active participation of the learners in the learning process and in the school life context"

(Charalambous & Yerosimou, 2015, p. 380).

From my research, I also learned that it is essential that participants (teacher and students) create a positive and fun learning environment. In this study, the teacher took into account the students' individual ways and paces of learning, their interests, lived experiences, and previous knowledge they brought to the classroom. The reviewed literature shows that a teacher's acknowledgment of students' musical interests and their previous knowledge, as well practical musical activities, and a supportive educational environment, are key factors for students' success (Temmerman, 2000). Bazy (2019) advises all teachers to be attentive and familiar to the kinds of music our students are listening to. Teachers should value students' musical interests. According to Bazy (2019) "student engagement increases significantly when students like the music they are studying, regardless of the genre" (p. 29). Moreover, when the teacher is familiar with the music our students listen to at home, teachers are "better equipped to help students make connections between the music they are listening to and the musical concepts they are studying at school" (Bazy, 2019, p. 30). Likewise, Williams (2019) also recommends that music classes include "a variety of musical styles and genres, embracing popular styles of interests to students" (p. 62). Certainly, "bringing musics into the classroom that interest students would help them connect their school musical experiences with their personal lives" (Williams, 2019, p. 69). I perceived during lesson observations the feeling of joy and an increase of students' motivation when the teacher taught them the refrain of the song "Jingle Bells" on the piano. It was Christmas time when the students learned to play this song. As it was a well-known song by the students at this time of the year, they were happy and motivated to play it. The students made easy connections learning this song because they knew it previously.

Moreover, Zeserson (2012) points out that motivation is the key factor for students to learn and achieve their goals and that teachers must be able to stimulate their motivation. As our students are motivated to bring their musical preferences and interests to the music classroom, it is essential that the teachers take into account and be able to work with these interests, hence facilitating an effective music education (Zeserson, 2012). The findings of my research demonstrated that student motivation for learning music concepts and piano skills. Zeserson's assertion is relevant to my study and aligns with my research findings. The teacher in this study stimulated students' creativity and motivation through multiple musical experiences as well acknowledging student interests and ideas such as in the moments of animal stories shared between the teacher and students during piano instruction.

Pedagogy is not only about teaching children, preparing lessons, selecting materials, methods and repertoire, but most importantly, "the means of exploring everything and anything that strengthens our own effectiveness in learning, in understanding, in communicating, and working with students of all ages and all stages of growth" (Maris, 2000, p. 3). Teaching is an art that values human relationships between teachers and students who share ideas and stories with each other, which enrich the learning process (Maris, 2000). Together, the teacher and the students in this study developed an engaged and highly motivated learning environment where the teaching and learning of music and piano concepts became a joyful endeavour.

## **5.7 Research Implications and Practical Implications**

My research attempted to understand the phenomenon of teaching and learning music concepts in a second language learning environment through the methodology of case study. In this qualitative research study, I explored the methodologies, techniques, approaches, and teaching

strategies used by the music teacher to facilitate the learning of musical concepts by the students in a bilingual context. I also observed how social interactions and the construction of knowledge that happened within the music classroom between the teacher and the students contributed to the acquisition of musical concepts in a second language. The students' individual ways and paces of learning, as well as their behaviors, curiosities, and creativities, were also key elements that facilitated their learning processes of music and piano concepts in a bilingual environment.

The study demonstrated that children are able to learn music concepts and piano skills in a bilingual context even when they had not yet mastered the second language. It was evident in the reviewed literature that studies in the fields of music and second-language education had their focus on second language acquisition using music as a viable resource and powerful tool for teaching and learning the second language. Little is known about the process of teaching and learning music concepts in bilingual environments when the aim of this learning outcome is the music. Therefore, one of the implications of my research for subsequent studies is that my inquiry attempted to fill the gap in the field of bilingual music education literature by focusing on the teaching and learning of music in a bilingual environment as the aim of the students' learning. My study also demonstrated that besides the learning of music concepts and piano skills, the students also had the opportunity to learn simple English words and sentences during the music lessons. They were able to sing along with the lyrics of the songs and recognize body parts' names when performing the action songs. The repetition of the activities, songs, actions, and dances, as well as simple English words and sentences, were essential for the learning of music to occur as well as the learning of English words.

The practical implications of my research are related to the teacher's approach. Through the

pedagogy of guided discovery learning, the teacher offered free exploration of the music concepts to the students while he guided their learning processes and construction of knowledge. The teacher took into account the individual ways and paces of learning of each student, and he was empathetic and caring with students' insights, stories, and previous knowledge they brought to the classroom. He also helped to boost students' creativity and natural curiosity by providing multiple ways of learning through play-based activities, games, music and movement, and action songs. The teacher's approach kept students engaged and highly motivated throughout the lessons. Moreover, it is also important to note that the establishment of the class routine, rapport between teacher and students, and the combination of the teacher adjusting his speed of speech with the students becoming accustomed to how he spoke, were important elements that contributed to the students' learning processes.

Accordingly, my research demonstrated that the use of movements, action songs, games, hand signs, and visible and tactile resources, facilitated the learning of the music concepts and piano skills. The pedagogy of play kept students motivated and willing to take the lessons. They learned music concepts and piano skills in fun and joyful ways. The teacher's kinesthetic and physical approaches enabled students to fully experience and embody the music concepts. It was noted in this study that the teacher's approach during the music lessons worked in a satisfactory manner with positive results in the students' learning process as was described in the findings. Therefore, I suggest that the teaching practices used by the teacher in this study could be implemented in the daily routine of other music classrooms.

### **5.8 Limitations of the Inquiry**

In this inquiry, I acknowledge that the interpretation of the data may have been affected by my



own bias due to my previous professional experience as a music teacher in bilingual elementary schools. However, in order to mitigate this limitation and to maintain integrity of this research, I was reflective, sensitive, and aware throughout the research process of my previous knowledge and teaching experience in bilingual education environments.

Another limitation that I have to acknowledge is related to the language of instruction. The teacher in this study was fully proficient in the English language while the students had limited proficiency. This conflict of different levels of English proficiency between participants presented some barriers to the teaching and learning process at the commencement of the lessons. However, the teacher slowed down his speed of speech (by week 6 of the lessons) after he mastered the curriculum and established a good rapport with his students. The teacher was cognizant and attentive to identify this issue and to not compromise the students' learning progress.

The role of the students' parents in this study was limited as they did not have access to the classroom in their child's weekly music lessons. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we had to limit the number of people inside the classroom during the lessons. Participation was restricted solely to the researcher, the music teacher, and the student. Therefore, parents' perspectives in relation to their child's music learning process were not included in this study, and thus this is a limitation to be considered.

Even though the parents did not have access to the classroom during their child's music lessons, the teacher dedicated 5 minutes after each individual lesson to speak with parents. The teacher explained what was done during each music lesson and also guided the parents in how they could help their child practice the piano at home. Overall, the parents had better fluency

with the English language than their children and thus facilitated the communication between the teacher and their children. Even though in-home music practices on the piano was recommended by the teacher to the students, these music activities were not included in this study, and therefore this is a limitation.

This research study was conducted in a bilingual environment where the teacher spoke solely English and students spoke languages other than English. The teaching and learning process happened in a second language. Therefore, this study is limited to a bilingual educational context.

### **5.9 Suggestions for Future Research**

In future research, it may be an asset to compare the teaching of piano skills and concepts using a more rote and traditional method of piano instruction such as Bastien (Piano for the Younger Beginner), Faber (Piano Adventures), Leila Fletcher (Piano Course), or Alfred's (Basic Piano Library) with students who have limited proficiency in a second language. These traditional methods for piano teaching involve a great amount of language usage during instruction between the teacher and the student. It requires that students have a good understanding in second language skills such as reading, writing, and listening.

An ethnographic study could also be conducted taking into consideration the diverse cultural backgrounds of the student participants. It could investigate whether different cultures and languages may influence the teaching and learning process of the music concepts and piano skills. The students in this study were from different nationalities and they were in Canada for less than two years. The multicultural profile is visible and strong in Canada, and as such, the issue of culture and identity are important elements to consider.

Lastly, I recommend that future studies be done in public and private bilingual schools focusing on methodologies and curricula. There is a need to investigate if the methodologies and curricula from both public and private bilingual schools are satisfactorily meeting the students' music learning in the early years of schooling. It would be interesting to conduct a study of multiple cases and to perform a cross-analysis of these two different contexts: public and private bilingual schools and their methodologies and curricula for music education. Some questions may arise from the aforementioned suggestion for future research: Is the public education system taking into account the multiple realities that exist in bilingual public schools related to different cultural backgrounds and languages? Are the curricula taking cultural diversity into account in these two different (public and private) bilingual educational environments? Are the music teachers well prepared in relation to the use of methodologies and careful to be inclusive when they face cultural diversity in their classrooms?

### **5.10 Personal Reflections**

To be back in an academic environment after 21 years since my undergraduate studies was indeed a huge challenge for me. In my career as a music teacher, during these 21 years I was practicing teaching music in bilingual elementary schools, teaching piano to private bilingual students, and volunteering at my local church as a pianist and choir conductor. My desire to conduct a research study in my field of expertise—music and bilingualism—flourished after seeing in these many years of professional practice that children in the early years were able to learn music in a second language. I was eager to understand how this phenomenon happened. I knew that it was possible for children to learn music in a second language as I had observed this in my daily practice, but I did not know “how.”

To conduct a research study such as this, was for me a realized dream and an accomplishment of hard work full of joy. While I was observing the music lessons in this study, and watching the interactions between the teacher and the students, I recalled times when I was in the classroom with my students. The passion to teach music to young children has always been in my heart. When we have this inner love for teaching, we, pedagogues, become truly another child while interacting with our students, listening to them, telling them stories, dancing, and singing. That is what happened in this study: the teacher and students developed a bond in the classroom.

The interviews performed with the students were also moments of joy for me. The students were naturally spontaneous and authentic in answering the interviews questions. I was surprised in hearing and knowing how much they had learned in this study. Some of the students started to sing excerpts of the songs they sang in the classroom during interviews. Others started to hand sign in front of me while singing high and low pitches learned during music lessons. The interview with the teacher was another remarkable moment. It was visible that he truly enjoyed the experience in teaching voluntarily for this research study. In his words, it was an “exciting experience” for him. He was also impressed in seeing “what the students were able to do at the end of this research.” It was surprising for him and he became emotional at the end of the interview.

Lastly, I would like to say that by the end of this research study I have the feeling that I became a better music teacher. The related literature that I read, associated with what I saw during the class observations, what I heard from my interviewees, and what I analyzed about the curriculum proved that it is possible for young children to learn music in a bilingual environment when they have not yet mastered the second language. The completion of this

research was truly a joyful and remarkable endeavor and so, I feel that my “mission is accomplished.”

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## Appendix A

### Welcome to Music Class

#### Daily Plan # 1

#### Key Concepts: Steady beat/ta, hi & low pitches

##### Intro:

Solfege: using so/mi with G/E pitches

**Hello, What's your name? My name is ....?** (using so/mi with G/E pitches)

- Variations – hair colour, age, etc.....

Poem/chant: keep a steady beat on lap (patsch), use various tempos

**\*\*\*\* is my hair and \*\*\*\* are my eyes.**

**I'm \*\*\*\* years old, I'm just the right size.**

**My name is \*\*\*\* and you can see, I'm very happy to be me!**

- Add student name to title page of student book
- Fill in blanks on p.1 of book (Note – teacher name in 'my name is' spot)

##### Concept: *steady beat/ ta*

###### p.1 **Keep the Beat**

- Patsch beat while pointing to the top line of hearts – one heart per beat
- Continue on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> line while adding the term 'ta' for each heart
- Up to walk the beat (may use felt red hearts to re-enforce)
- Down to keep beat/read beat while playing an instrument
- Have student continue to keep beat (movement or instrument) while teacher plays the music (no words) from **2's vs 3's** song (Singing Through the Primer)

###### p.2 **Ta gets 1**

- Identify student's right and left hands (left makes an L when thumb is out!)
- Play ta's on floor as noted on p.2 – stem up for RH and stem down for LH
- Play again using small hand drum

##### Concept: *high/low*

Song:

**Starlight, starbright, first star I see tonight,**

**Wish I may, wish I might have the wish I wish tonight.**

- Patsch while teaching song by rote
- Use hand signs for so and mi, then gross motor (stand, squat)
- Follow words on p.3 noting that each box is a beat and that the stars are higher and lower for higher and lower sounds

Explore:

Teacher plays high and low sounds/melodies on the piano – students reach up for high sounds, crouch down low for low sounds. Then have student find high and low on the piano. Discover that right side is high and left side is low. \*\* no need for student to sit yet!

Transition into discovering groups of 2 and 3 black keys on the piano and the pattern they make. Hand out student cards with 2 & 3 black keys and teach/play **2's vs 3's** song with the words this time.

Concept: Position at the Piano

- Demonstrate correct sitting position and hand position at the piano.
- Have student find groups of two black keys and play from low to high then high to low using RH then LH. Repeat with three black groups.
- Following p.2 using both hands, have student play ta's on groups of 2 black keys. Repeat on 3 keys.
- Using p.4, have student play **Going Up the 2's** and **Going Down the 3's**. Vary hands and tempo of beat, but try to have student keep a steady beat!
- Review picture on p.3 with student for their reference during the week.

Page 5 may be completed in class or assigned as HW.

Closing:

Farewell Song (patsch the beat)

**We had an adventure** (do do do re mi do )

**Musical Adventure** (re re re mi fa re)

**We're done our adventure** (so so so fa mi do)

**Time to go.** (re so do)

Solfege: **Goodbye \*\*\*\* See you next week.** (so mi)

Sticker book for attendance.



## Welcome to Music Class

### Daily Plan # 2

**Key Concepts: Steady beat/rhythm – long/short sounds (ta/ta-oo)  
hi & low (so/mi)**

#### Intro:

Solfège: using so/mi with G/E pitches

**Hello, \*\*\*. How are you? What's your favourite ....?** (using so/mi with G/E)

- Variations – food/colour/game/...

Poem/chant: keep a steady beat on lap (patsch), use various tempos

**Tony Chestnut knows I love you, Tony knows, Tony knows.**

**Tony Chestnut knows I love you, That's what Tony knows.**

#### Concept: *ta and ta-oo*

Review p.1 **Keep the Beat** & p.2 **Ta gets 1**

- Patsch beat & say 'ta' while pointing to the hearts & ta's.
- Play on small drum – noting RH and LH stems on p.2
- Up to walk the beat (may use felt red hearts on floor) while teacher plays the music (no words) from **Ta vs Ta-oo** song (Singing Through the Primer)

p.6 **Ta-oo gets 2**

- Introduce ta-oo which has two hearts! Chant '*ta-oo, 1, 2. Ta-oo gets 2*'
- Up to walk ta-oo's while repeating ta-oo for each step. 1 step for each ta-oo so slower than ta steps. Switch to ta's & ta step after a few, then back to ta-oo.
- Point to ta-oo hearts on p.6 while reading them, then continue with 'Ta or Ta-oo?' After reading repeat exercise on a rhythm instrument.
- Hand out new ta and ta-oo cards (to keep in ziplock baggie) and teach/play **ta vs ta-oo** song with the words this time.

p.7 **Tony Chestnut** (no melody this week – only rhythm please)

- Back down to read the rhythm of the song (ta & ta-oo) while pointing to the hearts, then read the words while clapping the ta/ta-oo. \*\*For ta-oo hold hands together for second pulse.

#### Concept: *high/low*

Review song following words on p.3

**Starlight, starbright, first star I see tonight,**

**Wish I may, wish I might have the wish I wish tonight.**

- Up for gross motor (stand, squat) and hand signs (so/mi)
- Introduce hand sign names (so/mi) & identify the hand signs pictures on wall. Find matching pictures on p.7 and follow/sing partial song on that page, then return to p.3 and sing **Starlight** on so/mi syllables with hand signs.

Transition into review of high and low on the piano. Teacher plays high and low sounds/melodies on the piano – students reach up for high sounds, crouch down low for low sounds.

p.4 **Up and Down the 2's and 3's**

- Review sitting position & hand position at the piano, then have student play using a slow ta beat, playing with RH then LH. Play again using ta-oo on each. Identify the ta-oo as slower/longer than ta.
- Using p.6, have student play **Ta or Ta-oo?** on groups of 2's then 3's.

Concept: Finger Numbers for Piano

p.8 **Finger Numbers**

- Teach the finger numbers and have students add numbers in the boxes then pat the beat while reading the **Finger Fun** poem.
- Have student line fingers up their Spider Fingers on the inside cover page and tap each finger while chanting the poem!

p.9 **Taking Turns**

- Have students first 'play' the piece on keyboard picture (small whiteboard) then transition to piano to play. Note that higher sounding pitch is higher on the page! Introduce 'stop sign'.
- Read finger numbers first time pieces are played and rhythm the time. Keep a steady beat when playing!

Page 10 may be completed in class or assigned as HW.

Closing:

Farewell Song (pat the beat)

**We had an adventure** (do do do re mi do )

**Musical Adventure** (re re re mi fa re)

**We're done our adventure** (so so so fa mi do)

**Time to go.** (re so do)

Solfege: **Goodbye \*\*\*\* See you next week.** (so mi)

Sticker book for attendance.

## Welcome to Music Class

### Daily Plan # 3

**Key Concepts: Steady beat/rhythm – long/short sounds (ta/ta-oo)  
hi & low (so/mi)**

#### Intro:

Solfège: using so/mi with G/E pitches

- **Hello, \*\*\*. How are you?** Variations ....? (so/mi G/E)

#### Concept: *ta/ta-oo*

Rhythm echos

- Clap a rhythm using ta and ta-oo's. Student repeats. Do 3 or 4

Rhythm reading (blue board & rhythm cards)

- Have student point & read the rhythms placed on the board, then clap or play on a rhythm instrument

#### Concept: *rhythm vs beat, & slow/fast beat (tempo)*

p.7 **Tony Chestnut**

- Review the rhythm of the song while clapping/playing then read the words while clapping rhythm. \*For ta-oo hold hands together for second pulse.

- Next keep a steady beat on lap (patsch) while repeating the words.

NEW – teach melody for song by rote, along with the actions for the song. (Info below)

Try singing with actions at a slow tempo, then faster ones!

p.11 **Jingle Bells**

- Read rhythm first while clapping, then read words. \*\* do not introduce the (missing) rests, simply leave appropriate 'space' when reading/clapping.

- Use jingle bells to play the rhythm while reading (or singing if the song is familiar to the child), then play again keeping the beat instead. Play again at a faster or slower tempo.

- If desired, use ta and ta-oo cards for **ta vs ta-oo** song at slow or fast tempo.

**The Rhythm and the Beat** (chant/audio recording)

- Follow directions given in 'The Rhythm and the Beat' songbook.

#### Concept: *high/low*

- Review **Starlight** song following words on p.3

- Stand up for gross motor (stand, squat) & repeat.

- Review hand sign names (so/mi) and sing again on so/mi syllables with hand signs standing, then follow the pictures on p.3 again. Note that higher pitch is higher up in the box and lower pitch is lower in it.

- Review high and low on the piano. Student finds high & low groups of 3 (or 2) black keys. Review that high is always right and lower is left.

p.11 **High and Low Pitches**

- Relate info above to pictures.

Concept: Piano Skillsp.8 **Finger Fun** (warmup)

- Have student line fingers up their Spider Fingers on the inside cover page and tap each finger while chanting the **Finger Fun** poem. Review proper hand position.

p.12 **Looking Glass**

- Have students first 'play' the piece on keyboard picture (small whiteboard) then transition to piano to play. Note that higher sounding pitches are higher on the page! Review 'stop sign' and stem direction for which hand.
- Read finger numbers first time pieces are played and rhythm syllables the second time. Keep a steady beat when playing!

p.13 **Jingle Bells**

- Note both hands are needed as well as their position on keyboard picture on bottom of the page!
- 'Play' on the keyboard picture, then up to piano to play. Again, read finger numbers first time and rhythm syllables the second. If child seems ready, try to sing and play!
- If time allows, have student march beat or play jingle bells on the beat while teacher plays Jingle Bells at various tempos.

Page 14 may be completed in class or assigned as HW.

Closing:

Farewell Song (patsch the beat)

**We had an adventure** (do do do re mi do )

**Musical Adventure** (re re re mi fa re)

**We're done our adventure** (so so so fa mi do)

**Time to go.** (re so do)

Solfege: **Goodbye \*\*\*\* See you after holidays!** (so mi)

Sticker book for attendance.

## Tony Chestnut

traditional

To - ny Chest - nut knows I love you. To - ny knows, To - ny knows.

5

To - ny Chest - nut knows I love you. That's what To - ny knows.

Actions: Touch the body part mentioned as you sing. Increase the tempo as desired.

**To - ny chest - nut knows I love you that's what To - ny knows**  
 toes knees chest head nose eyes heart clap clap toes knees nose

## Welcome to Music Class

### Daily Plan # 4

**Key Concepts: Steady beat/rhythm – long/short sounds (ta/ta-oo)  
hi & low (treble/bass), 'stepping' pitches**

#### Intro:

Solfege: using so/mi with G/E pitches. Intro la (A pitch)

- **Hello, \*\*\*. How was your holiday?** Variations ....? (so-mi \*\*\*\*, so la la so-so-mi)

#### Concept: *high/low: Treble and Bass clefs*

NEW p.15 **See Saw**

- Note the slightly higher picture in the song chart. *This is la which is only a bit higher/step higher than so.*

Find picture of la on p.15 (and on wall). Try singing the song with the solfege names & hand signs, then with the words. (This is actually a partner song. Students join sit on the floor with holding hands and 'see saw' back and forth at various tempos.)

- Stand up for gross motor (stand, squat, and tiptoe) & repeat.
- Review high and low on the piano. Student finds high & low groups of 3 (or 2) black keys. Review that high is always right and lower is left. NEW the symbol for high pitches is the treble clef; for low pitches, the bass clef.

p.15 **Bass clef and Treble clef**

- Find the clefs then hand out treble/bass cards and use for **Treble vs Bass** song (Singing Through the Primer)

#### Concept: *ta/ta-oo*

Rhythm echos

- Clap a rhythm using ta and ta-oo's. Student repeats. Do 3 or 4

Rhythm reading (blue board & rhythm cards)

- Have student point & read the rhythms placed on the board, then clap or play on a rhythm instrument

#### Concept: *rhythm vs beat, & slow/fast beat (tempo)*

**The Rhythm and the Beat** (chant/audio recording)

- Follow directions given in 'The Rhythm and the Beat' songbook.

p.7 **Tony Chestnut**

- Review the rhythm of the song while clapping/playing then read the words while clapping rhythm. \*For ta-oo hold hands together for second pulse.
  - Next keep a steady beat on lap (patsch) while singing the melody/words. (Info below)
- Finally, sing with actions at a slow tempo, then faster one(s)!
- If desired, use ta and ta-oo cards for **ta vs ta-oo** song at slow or fast tempo.

NEW p.17/18 **Freeze or/and Bloom**

- Read rhythm first while clapping, then play (with correct hand!) on floor or hand drum.

Concept: *'stepping' pitches*

- Continuing with p. 17/18, note that the lines & spaces make the rhythm look like it is 'stepping'. Sometimes 'stepping up' and other times 'stepping down'.

NEW p.16 **Moving By Steps**

- Read through information and discuss/demonstrate.
- Try a listening exercise if student is ready. Teacher at piano, student eyes closed – *do the sounds step up or step down?*

Concept: Piano Skillsp.8 **Finger Fun** (warmup)

- Have student line fingers up their Spider Fingers on the inside cover page and tap each finger while chanting the **Finger Fun** poem. Review proper hand position.

p.17 **Freeze**

- Review 'stop sign' and stem direction for which hand, but note treble and bass clef! Also note new hand locations.
- Read finger numbers first time pieces are played and rhythm syllables the second time. Keep a steady beat when playing!

p.18 **Bloom**

- As above

Concept: *Music Alphabet*NEW p. 16 **The Music Alphabet** - sung to the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle

- Keep a steady beat on lap (patsch) while singing the melody/words, then try singing only the 7 letters to the melody forwards and backwards at various tempos.
- P. 16 bottom exercise may be completed in class or assigned as HW.

Closing:

Farewell Song (patsch the beat)

**We had an adventure** (do do do re mi do )

**Musical Adventure** (re re re mi fa re)

**We're done our adventure** (so so so fa mi do)

**Time to go.** (re so do)

Solfege: **Goodbye \*\*\*\* Have fun when you're practicing!** (so mi la )

Sticker book for attendance.

## Welcome to Music Class

### Daily Plan # 5

**Key Concepts: Steady beat/rhythm – long/short sounds (ta/ta-oo)  
hi & low (treble/bass), 'stepping' pitches, dynamics: *f* and *p***

#### Intro:

Solfege: using so/la/mi with G/A/E pitches. Review la (A pitch)

- **Hello, \*\*\*. How *did your practicing go?*** or variation. (so-mi \*\*\*\*, so *la la so-so-so mi*)

#### Concept: *dynamics piano and forte*

p.15 **See Saw**

- Review so, mi, and la hand signs.

Using p.15, sing the song with the solfege names & hand signs, then with the words. (This is actually a partner song. Students join sit on the floor with holding hands and 'see saw' back and forth at various tempos.)

- Try the song quietly and loudly. Introduce terms *piano* and *forte* and their symbols (on dynamic dice)

NEW p. 19 Find the *p* and *f* symbols and look at assignment. May be done in class or at home. Hand out *forte* and *piano* cards and use while listening to '*Loud! Quiet.*' Point to the ***forte*** and jump up when it is loud; get small and point to ***piano*** when it is quiet.

#### Concept: *rhythm & beat, slow/fast beat (tempo)*

p. 19 NEW **My Mittens**

- Teach by rote while patsching lap. Repeat, changing tempos & dynamics. Opt. actions.

**Mittens for the snow time,** (*fingers flutter down like snow*)

**When the world is white,**

**Mittens for my two hands,** (*hold up two hands*)

**Mittens left and right** (*wave left hand, then right hand*)

**Mittens with a thumb place** (*thumbs up*)

**Mittens warm and snug** (*hug self as if nice and warm*)

**Mittens make me feel like**

**A bug inside a rug!** (*wrap one hand over the other like a blanket*)

#### Concept: *ta/ta-oo*

Rhythm echoes

- Clap a rhythm using ta and ta-oo's. Student repeats. Do 3 or 4

p.7 **Tony Chestnut**

- Review the rhythm of the song while clapping/playing then read the words while clapping rhythm. \*For ta-oo hold hands together for second pulse.

- Sing with actions at various tempos and dynamics. Reinforce piano & forte.

p.17/18 **Freeze or/and Bloom**

- Read rhythm while tapping floor (or hand drum) with appropriate hand. Review treble clef for high sounds/right hand, and bass clef for low/left.



Concept: Piano Skillsp.8 **Finger Fun** (warmup)

- Have student line fingers up their Spider Fingers on the inside cover page and tap each finger while chanting the **Finger Fun** poem. Review proper hand position.

p.17/18 **Freeze or/and Bloom**

- Review 'stop sign' and hand locations before playing one (or both).
- Read finger numbers first time pieces are played and rhythm syllables the second time. Keep a steady beat when playing!

Concept: 'stepping' pitches

- Continuing with p. 17/18, review that the lines & spaces make the notes look like they are 'stepping'. Sometimes 'stepping up' and other times 'stepping down'.

p.16 **Moving By Steps**

- Review information and discuss. NEW we can 'step' up and down the Music Alphabet. Use the Music Alphabet exercise on the bottom of the page to 'step up' or 'step down' the letters.

p.16 **The Music Alphabet** - sung to the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle

- Keep a steady beat on lap (patsch) while singing the melody/words, then try singing only the 7 letters to the melody forwards and backwards at various tempos/dynamics.

Concept: *The Music Alphabet on the Piano (Use Deer, Elephant, and Camel mini animals.)*

- NEW **We can use animals to help us remember Alphabet names of the piano keys! Let's find the group of two black keys. The Deer is very shy and likes to hide between these black keys; they are the trees he hides in. This is our D/Deer key! When we 'step up' to the next key we step up in the alphabet. What letter is 'up' from D? .... Yes, E! This is where the Elephant lives. He's quite large so needs lots of room. Good thing there's no black key next to him! What if we 'step down' from D? ..... The C key is where the camel lives. Camels live in the desert where there are few trees as well.....Let's walk our fingers 2-3-4 to go 'stepping up' and 'stepping down' where our new friends live!** Use 2/3/4 of RH or LH to repeat up high and down low

p.21 **Identify C, D, E**

- Do together in class

p.12 **Looking Glass**

- Note the stepping patterns. Working together, add the C/D/E letter names under the finger numbers then up to try playing at the piano!

p.20 **Stepping Up, Stepping Down**

- Work through together and assign. Also assign p.22 to do at home.

Closing:

Farewell Song (patsch the beat)

**We had an adventure** (do do do re mi do )

**Musical Adventure** (re re re mi fa re)

**We're done our adventure** (so so so fa mi do)

**Time to go.** (re so do)

Solfege: **Goodbye \*\*\*\* Have fun when you're practicing!** (so mi la )

Sticker book for attendance.

## Welcome to Music Class

### Daily Plan # 6

**Key Concepts: Steady beat/rhythm – long/short sounds (ta/ta-oo)  
hi & low (treble/bass), ‘stepping’ pitches, dynamics: *f* and *p***

#### Intro:

Solfege: using so/la/mi with G/A/E pitches.

- **Hello, \*\*\*. What’s your *favour-ite* game to play?** or variation (so-so mi \*\*, so-so *la la* so-so mi)

#### Concept: *dynamics -piano and forte, tempo -fast/slow*

p.15 **See Saw**

- Review so, mi, and la hand signs.
- Review the song with the solfege names & hand signs, then with the words.
- Review the terms *piano* and *forte* and their symbols (on dynamic dice). Roll to choose what dynamic to sing for each line.

p.7 **Tony Chestnut**

- Review the words, then roll to choose what dynamic to sing for each line.
- Try singing with actions at a slow tempo, then faster ones!

p. 19 Find the ***p*** and ***f*** symbols. While listening to ‘**Loud! Quiet**’ point to the ***forte*** and jump up when it is loud; get small and point to ***piano*** when it is quiet.

#### Concept: *ta/ta-oo*

Rhythm echoes

- Clap a rhythm using ta and ta-oo’s. Student repeats. Do 3 or 4

NEW p. 23 **Bounce High**

- Read the rhythm of the song (ta & ta-oo) while pointing to the hearts, then read the words while clapping the ta/ta-oo.
- ‘Read’ the hand signs names, then sing using hand signs/names, and finally with words while patsching lap. Substitute rhyming words for ‘Mexico’ (Costco, Ontario, ...)
- Repeat, changing tempos & dynamics. May use rhythm instrument to keep steady beat or to play the rhythm.

#### Concept: *rhythm & beat*

**The Rhythm and the Beat** (chant/audio recording)

- Review from previous lesson

#### Skill: Piano

p.8 **Finger Fun** (warmup)

- Have student line fingers up their Spider Fingers on the inside cover page and tap each finger while chanting the **Finger Fun** poem. Review proper hand position.

#### Concept: *note names on the piano (Use Deer, Elephant, and Camel mini animals.)*

- Review the locations of D, C, & E on the piano. Have student place mini-animals appropriately on the keyboard then walk their fingers 2-3-4 to go 'stepping up' and 'stepping down' C D E in high and low locations on the piano. (Check their p.22 HW)
- Play '**Beethoven Says**' card game to review RH/LH, finger numbers, and C D E locations.

Concept: *itches 'stepping' up or down*

- p. 16 & 20 Review that the lines & spaces make the notes look like they are 'stepping'. They can be 'stepping up' and or 'stepping down'.
- p. 23 Referring to the visual, use three Duplo block 'steps' and the mini camel, deer, and elephant to create the 'stepping up' and 'stepping down' patterns. Then create some of the patterns on p.20 **Stepping Up, Stepping Down**. Finally, up to the piano to play the piece. *f* or *p*? Continue practice on p.20 this week. Also review p.12 **Looking Glass** as desired (in class or as HW)

Listening

- At the piano, play patterns that step up and others that step down. Have student identify which way the pitch goes. May use p.23 visuals as guide.

Concept: *music alphabet going up and down*

- p.16 **The Music Alphabet** - sung to the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle
- Keep a steady beat on lap (patsch) while singing the melody/words, then try singing only the 7 letters to the melody forwards and backwards at various tempos/dynamics.
  - Review 'stepping' up and down the Music Alphabet. Use 5 Duplo block 'steps' and alphabet hearts (A-G) to review 'what comes next'.

p.24 **Who comes next?**

- Assign as HW

Closing:

Farewell Song (patsch the beat)

**We had an adventure** (do do do re mi do)      **Musical Adventure** (re re re mi fa re)

**We're done our adventure** (so so so fa mi do)      **Time to go.** (re so do)

Solfege: **Goodbye \*\*\*\* Have fun when you're practicing!** (so mi la )

Sticker book for attendance.

## Welcome to Music Class

### Daily Plan # 7

**Key Concepts: Steady beat/rhythm – long/short sounds (ta/ta-oo)  
hi & low (treble/bass), dynamics: *f* and *p*, 'stepping' & 'skipping' pitches**

#### Intro:

Solfege: using so/la/mi with G/A/E pitches.

- **Hello, \*\*\*. What's the weather like outside?** or variation (so-mi \*\*, so-so *la la* so-so mi)

Concept: *rhythm vs beat, dynamics -piano and forte, tempo -fast/slow*

#### p. 23 **Bounce High**

- Review the hand signs names & sing using hand signs & names then with sing words while patsching lap. Substitute rhyming words for 'Mexico' (Tokyo, Jericho, Chicago ...)
- Repeat, changing tempos & dynamics. May use rhythm instrument to keep steady beat and/or to play the rhythm.
- Read the rhythm of the song (ta & ta-oo) while pointing to the heart beats, then read the rhythm while clapping the beat.

Concept: *ta/ta-oo*

Rhythm echoes

- Clap a rhythm using ta and ta-oo's. Student repeats. Do 3 or 4

Concept: *steady beat*

- Up to walk the beat while teacher plays the music (no words) from **Step vs Skip** song (Singing Through the Primer). Change tempos as you play if appropriate for student.

Concept: *music alphabet going up and down*

#### p.16 **The Music Alphabet** - sung to the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle

- Keep a steady beat on lap (patsch) while singing the melody/words, then try singing only the 7 letters to the melody forwards and backwards at various tempos/dynamics.
- Review 'stepping' up and down the Music Alphabet. Use 5 Duplo block 'steps' and alphabet hearts (A-G) to review 'what comes next'. (Check their p.24 HW)

Skill: Piano

#### p.8 **Finger Fun** (warmup)

- Have student line fingers up their Spider Fingers on the inside cover page and tap each finger while chanting the **Finger Fun** poem. Review proper hand position.

Concept: *note names on the piano (Armadillo, Bear, Deer, Elephant, and Camel mini animals.)*

- Review the locations of D, C, & E on the piano. Have student place mini-animals appropriately on the 'small tinsheet' keyboard on the floor.
- NEW Introduce Armadillo and Bear. Place on the small keyboard as introduced.  
**What letter comes before C in the alphabet? ... yes, B. And on the keyboard the Bear lives next to the camel. Bear likes to be close to trees, but he likes open space too....**

**What comes before B? .... This is the Armadillo. He's much smaller so likes to have a place to hide from the bigger animals during the day when he's asleep...between these 2 black keys.**

- Take the small animals up to piano and find different places for them to live – up high and down low. **We need all five fingers to play all five of our friends. Let's start on A and step up all the way to E!** Demonstrate: walk fingers to go 'step-ping up the trail' and 'step-ping down the trail'. Optional: use verse below with ta ta ta ta ta ta-oo on each of the five keys going up, then going down on the last line.
  - o **Ar-ma-dil-lo sleeps all day, when Big Bear is out to play.**  
**Camel is a friendly guy, but the Deer is very shy.**  
**Elephant remembers all. E, D, C, B, A, that's all!**

Concept: pitches 'stepping' up or down

- p.24 Review that the lines & spaces make the notes look like they are 'stepping' up or down as well as Treble and Bass clefs before playing.
- NEW p.25 **More Steps!** (Note the addition of a third line; needed to facilitate more steps. Ignore unless student notices.)  
Note/discuss new armadillo and bear pictures and that Stepping notes go 'line/space/line' (or space/line'/space). Read note names/clap rhythm, then up to try on piano. **f** or **p**?

Concept: NEW 'skipping' pitches

- Have student identify A B C D E on a large floor keyboard and walk/step up and down the keys. (No shoes or barefeet please!) Next have them 'skip' a key by jumping over it!
- Referring to the visual on the bottom of p.25, use five Duplo block 'steps' and the mini animals to create the 'step-ping up the trail' pattern and then the 'skipping' pattern next to it. **If we skip a key, we must skip a finger!** Discuss and then up to the piano to try skipping keys/fingers.
- Hand out NEW 'step' and 'skip' cards (to keep in ziplock baggie) and teach/play **Step vs Skip** song with the words this time.

p.26 **Colour the Keys**

- Assign as HW

Closing:

Farewell Song (patsch the beat)

**We had an adventure** (do do do re mi do)      **Musical Adventure** (re re re mi fa re)

**We're done our adventure** (so so so fa mi do)      **Time to go.** (re so do)

Solfège: **Goodbye \*\*\*\* Have fun when you're practicing!** (so mi la )

Sticker book for attendance.

## Welcome to Music Class

### Daily Plan #8

**Key Concepts: Steady beat/rhythm – long/short sounds (ta/ta-oo)  
hi & low (treble/bass), dynamics: f and p, 'stepping' & 'skipping' pitches**

#### Intro:

Solfege: using so/la/mi with G/A/E pitches.

- **Hello, \*\*\*. TEACHER CHOICE OF QUESTION** (so-mi \*\*, so-so la la so-so mi)

#### Concept: *rhythm vs beat, dynamics - piano and forte, tempo -fast/slow*

Review solfege songs from term as desired.

p.3 **Starlight Starbright**

p.15 **See Saw**

p.23 **Bounce High**

- Review the hand signs names & sing using hand signs & names then with sing words while patsching lap.
- Repeat, changing tempos & dynamics. May use rhythm instrument to keep steady beat and/or to play the rhythm.
- Read the rhythm of the song (ta & ta-oo) while pointing to the heart beats, then read the rhythm while clapping the beat.

#### Concept: *steady beat vs rhythm, ta/ta-oo*

- Up to walk the beat while teacher plays the music (no words) from song of choice from *Singing Through the Primer*. Change tempos as you play if appropriate for student.

- **The Rhythm and the Beat** (chant/audio recording)

Rhythm echoes

- Clap a rhythm using ta and ta-oo's. Student repeats. Do 3 or 4. Use rhythm cards on 'blue chart' if desired.

p.7 **Tony Chestnut**

- Review the rhythm of the song while clapping/playing then read the words while clapping rhythm. \*For ta-oo hold hands together for second pulse.
- Keep a steady beat on lap (patsch) while repeating the words.
- Sing with actions at a slow tempo, then faster ones!

#### Skill: Piano

p.8 **Finger Fun** (warmup)

- Have student line fingers up their Spider Fingers on the inside cover page and tap each finger while chanting the **Finger Fun** poem. Review proper hand position.

#### Concept: *note names on the piano (Armadillo, Bear, Deer, Elephant, and Camel mini animals.)*

- Review the locations of A, B, C, D & E with mini-animals on the 'small tinsheet' keyboard on the floor.
- Play '**Beethoven Says**' card game to review RH/LH, finger numbers, and A B C D E locations. Play some up high and others down low.

- Take the small animals up to piano and find different places for them to live – up high and down low. **We need all five fingers to play all five of our friends. Let's start on A and step up all the way to E!** Demonstrate: walk fingers to go 'step-ping up the trail' and 'step-ping down the trail'. Optional: use verse below with ta ta ta ta ta ta-oo on each of the five keys going up, then going down on the last line.
  - o **Ar-ma-dil-lo sleeps all day, when Big Bear is out to play.  
Camel is a friendly guy, but the Deer is very shy.  
Elephant remembers all. E, D, C, B, A, that's all!**

Concept: pitches 'stepping' vs 'skipping' pitches, NEW 'skip 2' pitches

- p.25 **More Steps!**  
Review that *Stepping notes go 'line/space/line' (or space/line'/space)*. Read note names/clap rhythm, then up to try on piano. RH *piano* then LH *forte*? (student choice)

#### NEW p.27 **Starlight**

Note/discuss '*Skipping*' notes – they always skip a letter/skip a key

- Have student identify A B C D E on a large floor keyboard and walk/step up and down the keys, then 'skip' a key. (No shoes or barefeet please!)
- **If we skip a key, we must skip a finger!** Discuss and then up to the piano to try skipping keys/fingers.
- Read note names/clap rhythm, then up to try on piano. \* p.27 is 1<sup>st</sup> half of song only. Option to have them figure out the remainder by ear.

#### NEW p.28 **Bounce High, Bounce Low**

- Find the steps and the skips in the music. Option to use duplo blocks/mini-animals or large floor keyboard as needed.
- Read and clap the rhythm, then up to piano to play! Option to sing while playing.

#### **Listening**

- At the piano, play patterns that step up or skip up and others that step down or skip down. Have student identify steps or skips and, if student ready, whether the pitch goes up or down as well! May use p.25 visuals as guide.

#### NEW p.28 **See Saw**

- NEW Sometimes we need to skip over 2 keys! Back to large floor keyboard and walk/step up and down the keys, then skip 2 keys. (No shoes or barefeet please!)
- Find the steps, skips, and skip 2's in the music. Option to use duplo blocks/mini-animals or large floor keyboard as needed.
- Read and clap the rhythm, then up to piano to play!

#### Closing:

Farewell Song (patsch the beat)

**We had an adventure** (do do do re mi do)      **Musical Adventure** (re re re mi fa re)

**We're done our adventure** (so so so fa mi do)      **Time to go.** (re so do)

Solfege: **Goodbye \*\*\*\*** .... **TEACHER CHOICE/STUDENT SPECIFIC PHRASE** (so mi la )

Sticker book for attendance.

**Appendix B****Students Book Images**

Welcome  
to  
Music Class!

**Student  
Name** \_\_\_\_\_



## Welcome To Music Class

1

Hello!

What's your name? My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

---

\_\_\_\_\_ is my hair and \_\_\_\_\_ are my eyes.

I'm \_\_\_\_\_ years old, I'm just the right size.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and you can see,

I'm very happy to be me!

---

### Keep the Beat



2

ta gets 1

ta = 1

ta =  or 

Right Hand



















Left Hand



Which Hand?



Star light, Star bright

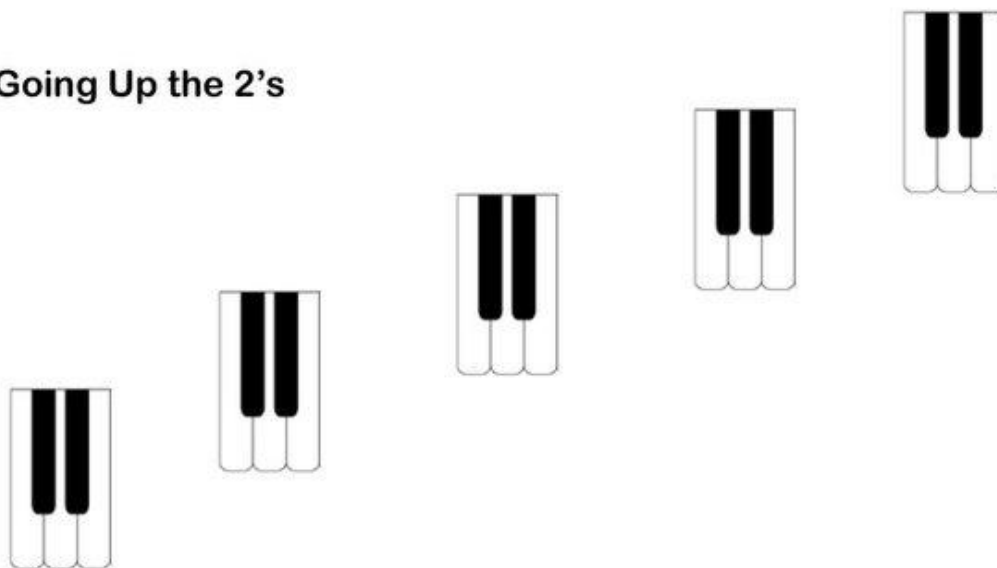
 <b>Star</b>	 <b>light</b>	 <b>Star</b>	 <b>bright</b>
 <b>First</b>	 <b>star I</b>	 <b>see to -</b>	 <b>night</b>
 <b>wish I</b>	 <b>may</b>	 <b>wish I</b>	 <b>might</b>
 <b>have the</b>	 <b>wish I</b>	 <b>wish to -</b>	 <b>night.</b>



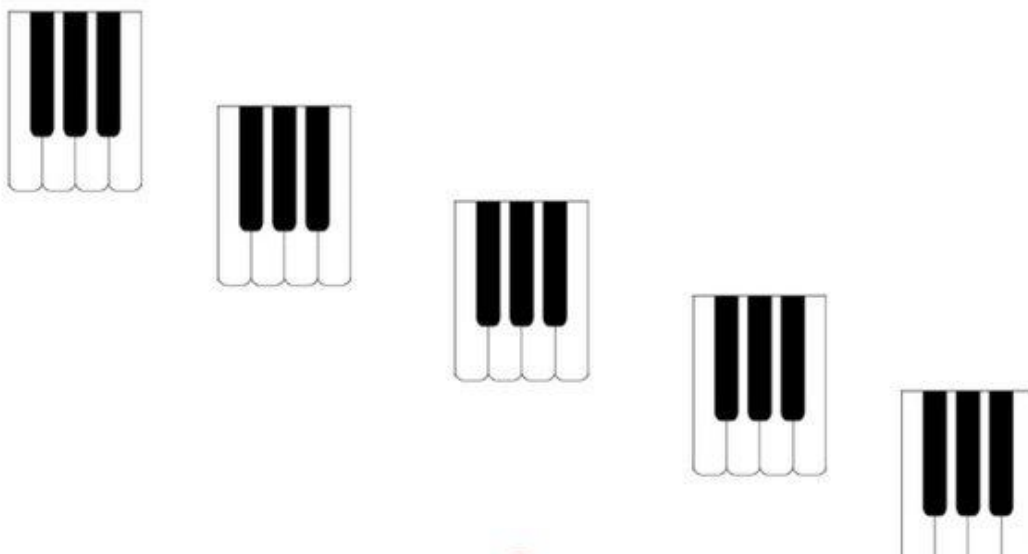
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## Up and Down the 2's and 3's

Going Up the 2's

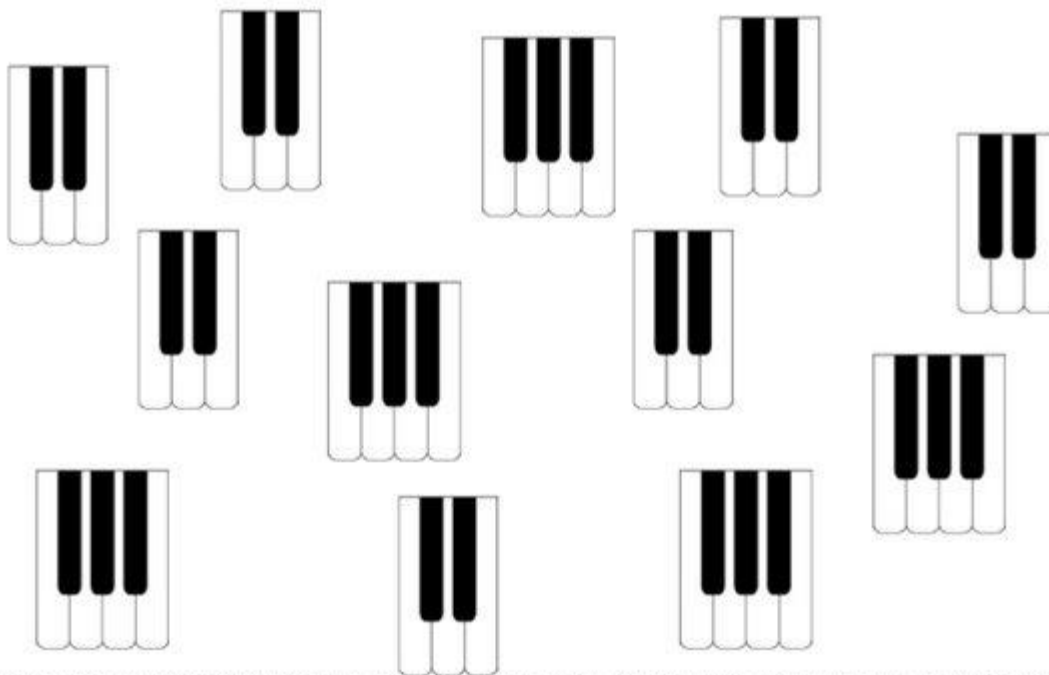


Going Down the 3's



5

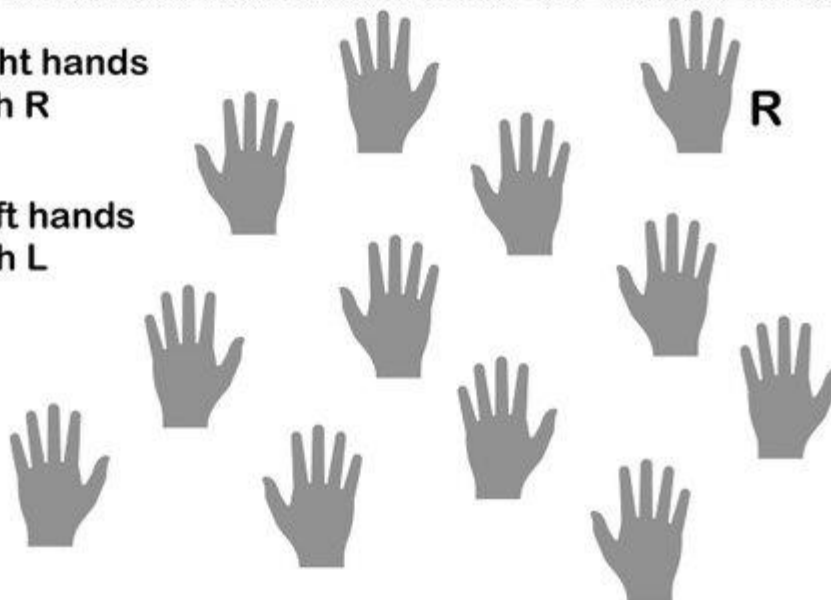
Circle the groups of 2 black keys RED.  
Circle the groups of 2 black keys BLUE.



---



Label right hands  
with R

Label left hands  
with L

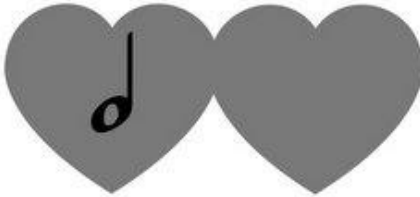


6

ta-oo gets two

ta-oo = ta-oo = 

ta-oo = 1 + 1



ta-oo = 2



Ta or Ta-oo?



## Tony Chestnut



To - ny Chest - nut



To - ny knows,



To - ny Chest - nut



That's what To - ny



knows I love you,



To - ny knows.



knows I love you,



knows.

## Hand Signs for Singing

So



Mi



Star



light,



Star



bright



First



star I



see to



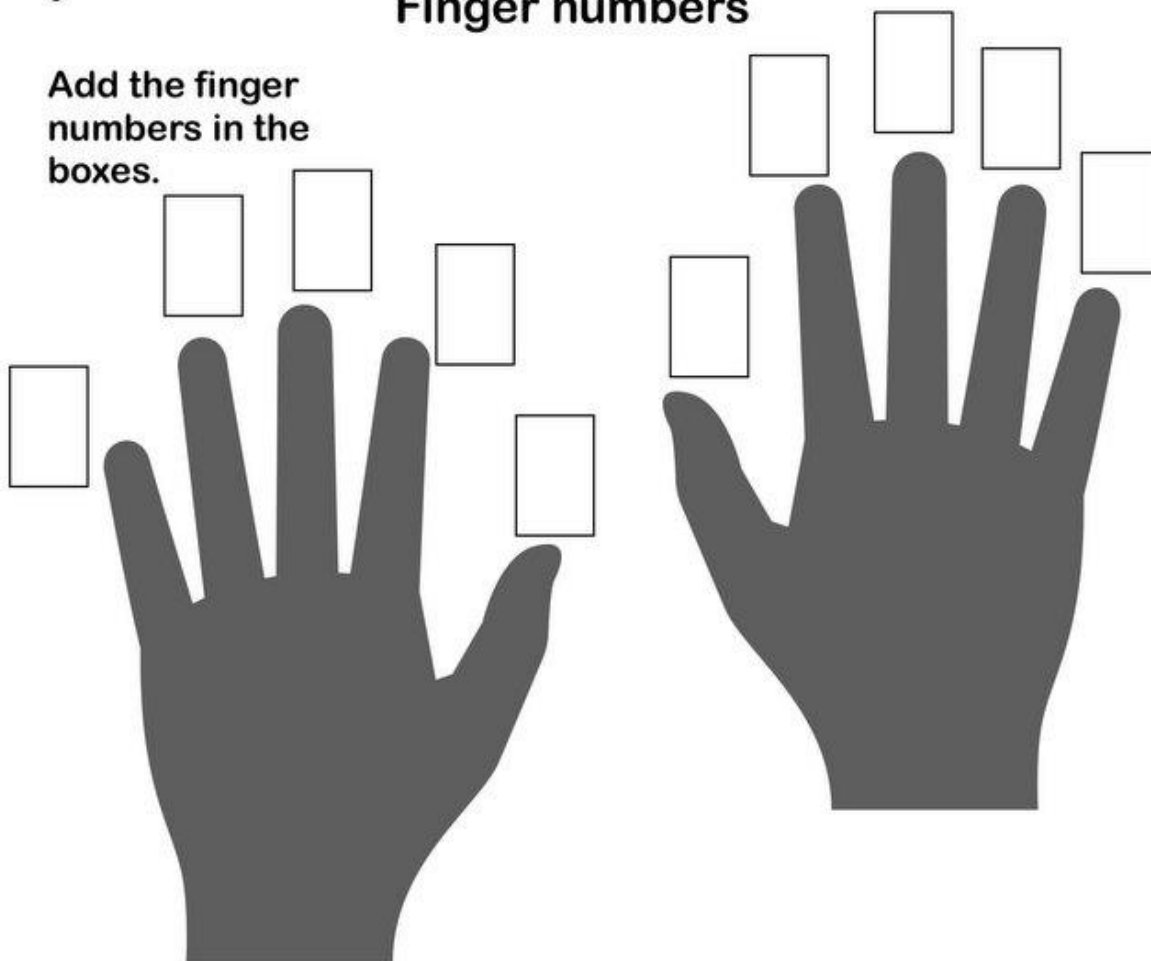
night



8

## Finger numbers

Add the finger numbers in the boxes.




---

### Finger Fun

Finger 1, lots of fun.

Finger 2, tapping you.

Finger 3, curve with me

Finger 4, just one more.

Finger 5, finger 5 jive!



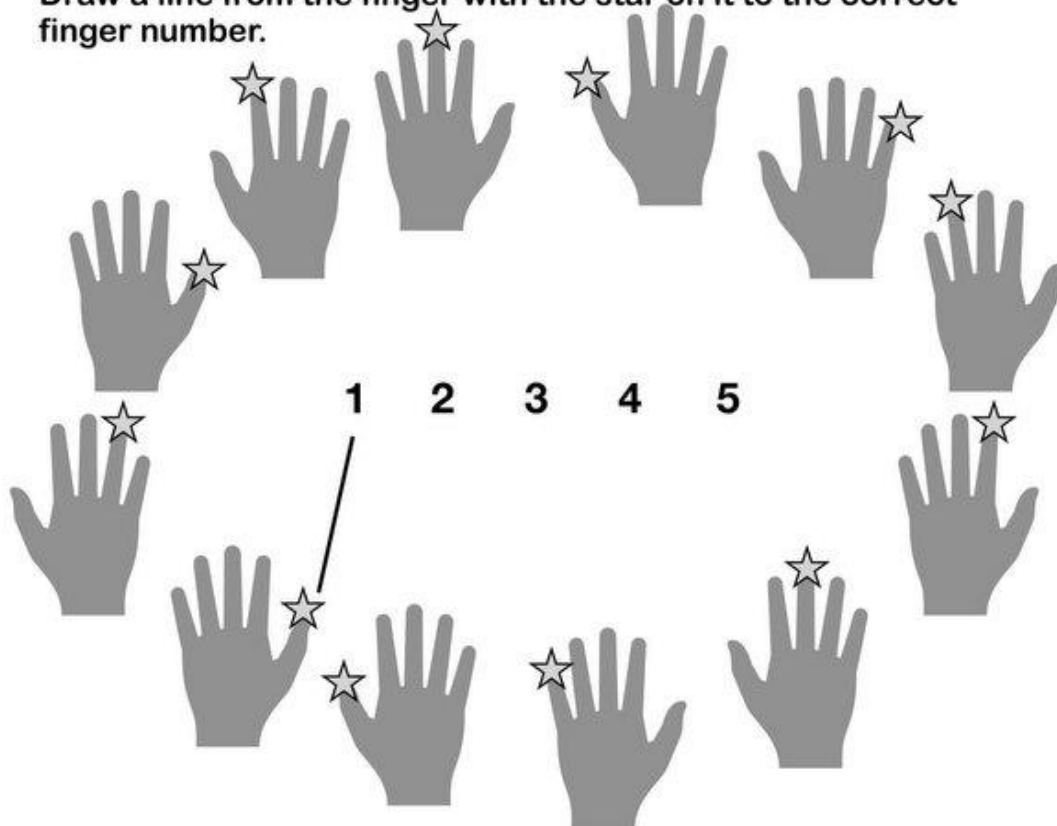
## Taking Turns

The exercise consists of four rows, each representing a different hand and a specific musical pattern. Each row includes a fingering diagram, musical notation with finger numbers, and a 'STOP' sign.

- Row 1 (RH):** Fingering diagram shows fingers 2 and 3 on two keys. Musical notation: two measures of quarter notes. Measure 1: finger 2 on a key, finger 3 on a higher key, finger 2 on the lower key. Measure 2: finger 2 on a key, finger 3 on a higher key, finger 2 on the lower key.
- Row 2 (LH):** Fingering diagram shows fingers 3 and 2 on two keys. Musical notation: two measures of quarter notes. Measure 1: finger 3 on a key, finger 2 on a higher key, finger 2 on the lower key. Measure 2: finger 3 on a key, finger 3 on a higher key, finger 3 on the lower key.
- Row 3 (RH):** Fingering diagram shows fingers 2 and 3 on two keys. Musical notation: two measures of quarter notes. Measure 1: finger 2 on a key, finger 3 on a higher key, finger 2 on the lower key, finger 3 on a higher key. Measure 2: finger 2 on a key, finger 2 on a higher key, finger 2 on the lower key, finger 2 on a higher key.
- Row 4 (LH):** Fingering diagram shows fingers 3 and 2 on two keys. Musical notation: two measures of quarter notes. Measure 1: finger 2 on a key, finger 2 on a higher key, finger 3 on a higher key, finger 3 on a higher key. Measure 2: finger 2 on a key, finger 2 on a higher key, finger 2 on the lower key, finger 2 on a higher key.

10

Draw a line from the finger with the star on it to the correct finger number.



**Music Math**

**\*\*Remember: ta = 1 and ta-oo = 2**

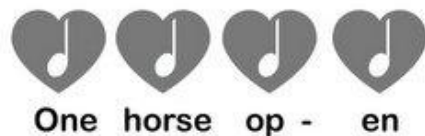
$$\text{♪} + \text{♪} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$\text{♪} + \text{♪} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

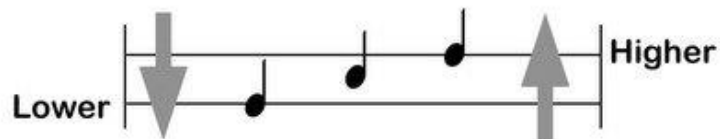
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$$\text{♪} + \text{♪} + \text{♪} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

## Jingle Bells

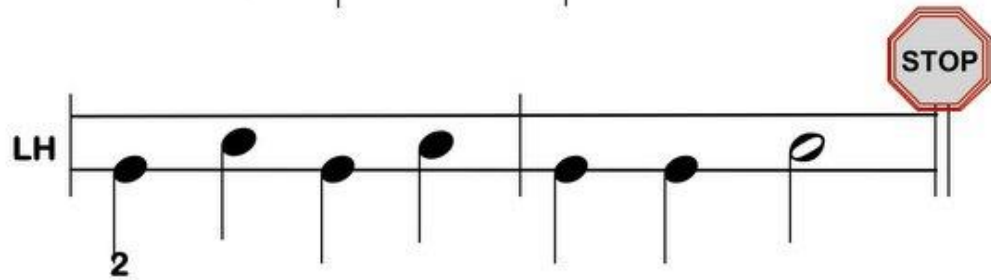
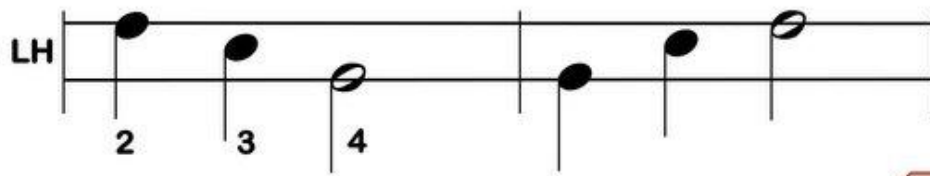
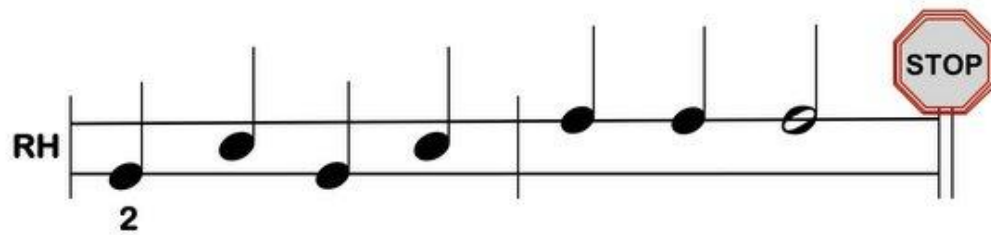
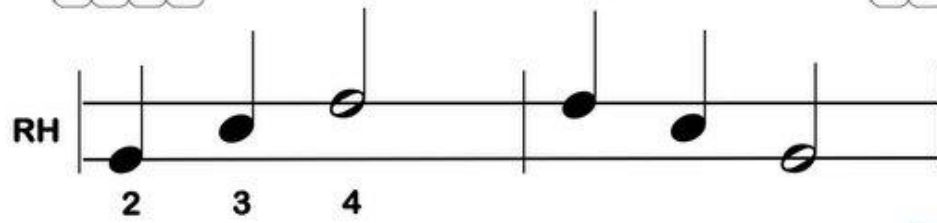
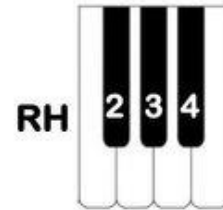


## High and Low pitches



12

## Looking Glass



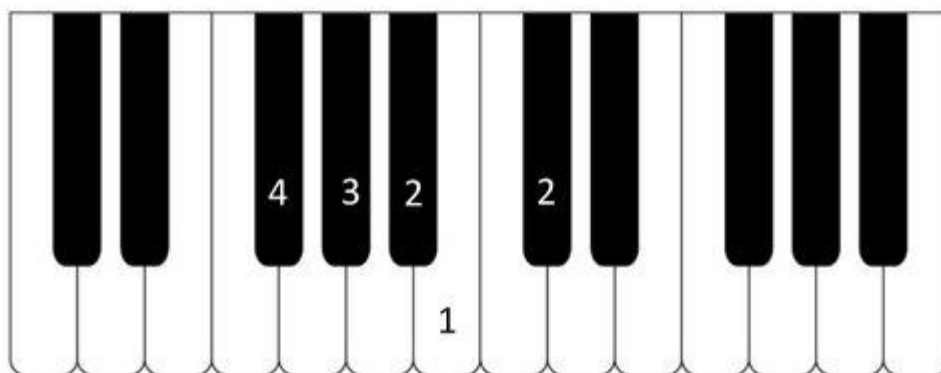
## Jingle Bells

Musical notation for the first staff of 'Jingle Bells'. The staff shows a sequence of notes with fingerings indicated below. The notes are: G4 (RH 2), A4 (RH 2), B4 (RH 2), C5 (RH 2), B4 (RH 2), A4 (RH 2), G4 (RH 2), F4 (RH 2), E4 (RH 4), D4 (RH 3), C4 (RH 2).

Musical notation for the second staff of 'Jingle Bells'. The staff shows a sequence of notes with fingerings indicated below. The notes are: G4 (LH 1), A4 (LH 1), B4 (LH 1), C5 (LH 1), B4 (LH 1), A4 (LH 2), G4 (LH 2), F4 (LH 2), E4 (LH 2), D4 (LH 3), C4 (LH 3), B3 (LH 2), A3 (LH 3).

STOP

Jingle bells, jingle bells, Ringing all the way.  
Oh, what fun it is to ride in-a one-horse open sleigh...



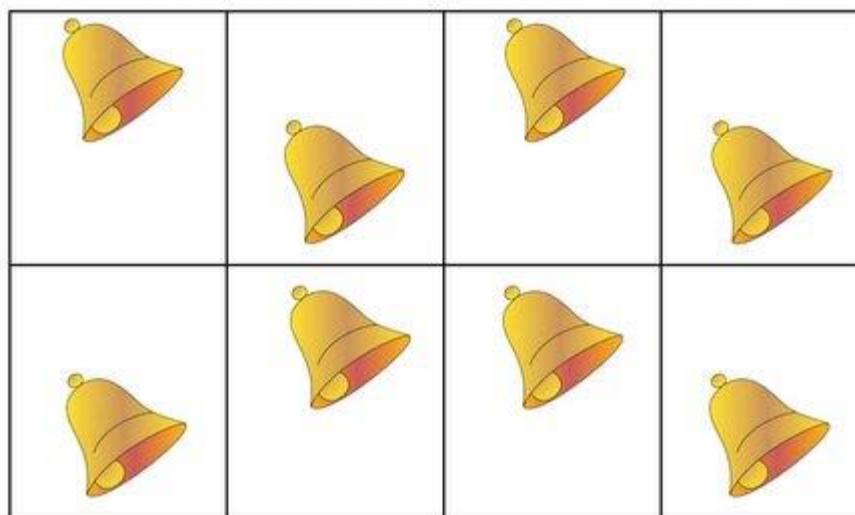
14

## Colour by Beats

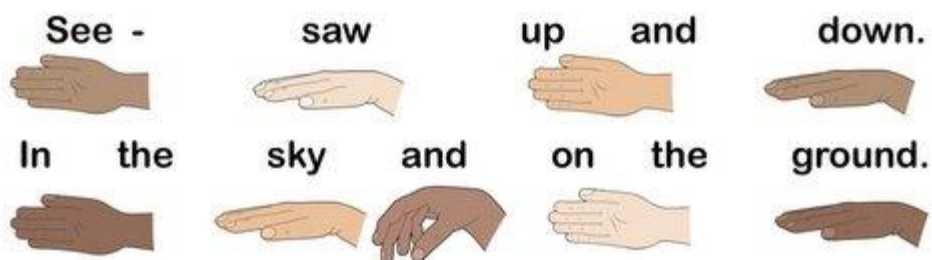
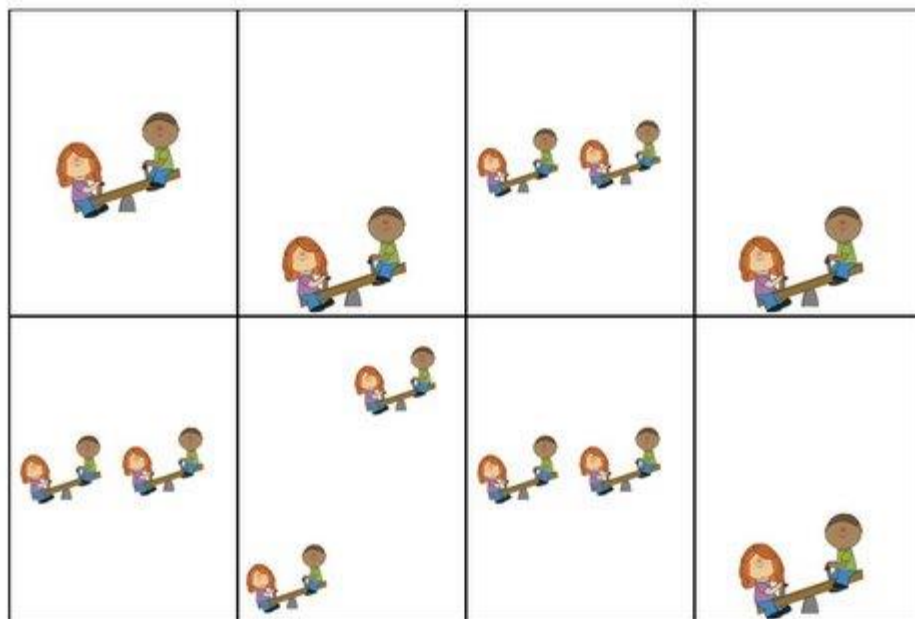
Add the number of beats in each present, then colour it using the key below.



So or Mi? In each box, write S for higher and M for lower.



## See Saw



## Hand Sign for Singing

La is one step higher than So

La



Bass Clef  
low pitches  
left hand

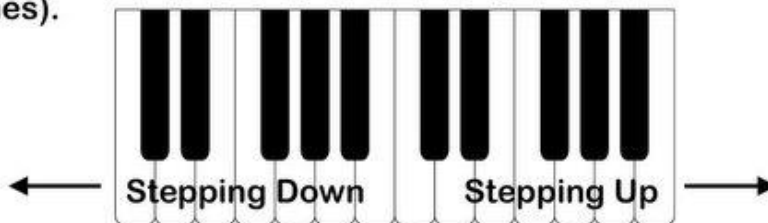


Treble Clef  
high pitches  
right hand

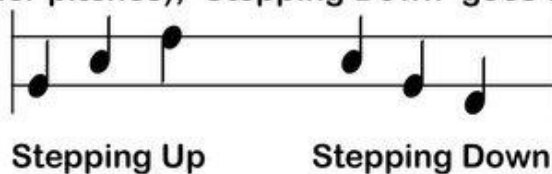
16

### Moving by Steps

- when we move from one key to the next we 'step'. 'Stepping Up' goes to the right (higher pitches), 'Stepping Down' goes to left (lower pitches).



- when we move from a line to a space we 'step'. 'Stepping Up' goes to up (higher pitches), 'Stepping Down' goes to down (lower).



### The Music Alphabet

A B C D E F G, music alphabet for me,  
Going up is so easy; going down can be tricky.  
I will sing it every day, G F E D C B A

Complete the Music Alphabet: fill in the missing letters

A \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_

C \_\_\_\_\_ G \_\_\_\_\_

F \_\_\_\_\_ B \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_ A

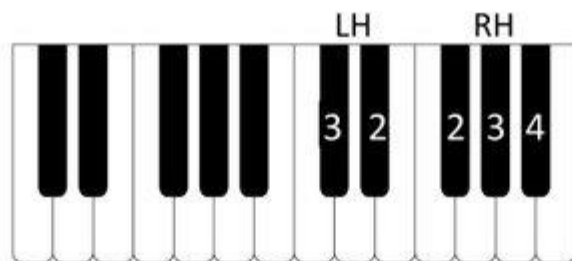


### Freeze

First system of musical notation for 'Freeze'. The right hand (RH) plays a sequence of notes: G4 (finger 4), A4 (finger 3), B4 (finger 2), C5 (finger 3), followed by a whole rest. The second measure has G4 (finger 4), A4 (finger 3), B4 (finger 2), C5 (finger 3), followed by a whole rest. The third measure has G4 (finger 4), A4 (finger 3), followed by a whole rest. The left hand (LH) has a whole rest in the first two measures, then plays a triplet of notes: C4 (finger 3), B3 (finger 2), A3 (finger 3) in the third measure, followed by a whole rest.

Second system of musical notation for 'Freeze'. The right hand (RH) plays a sequence of notes: G4 (finger 4), A4 (finger 3), B4 (finger 2), C5 (finger 3), followed by a whole rest. The second measure has G4 (finger 4), A4 (finger 3), B4 (finger 2), C5 (finger 3), followed by a whole rest. The third measure has G4 (finger 4), A4 (finger 3), followed by a whole rest. The fourth measure has G4 (finger 2), A4 (finger 2), followed by a whole rest. The left hand (LH) has a whole rest in the first two measures, then plays a triplet of notes: C4 (finger 3), B3 (finger 2), A3 (finger 3) in the third measure, followed by a whole rest.

Third system of musical notation for 'Freeze'. The right hand (RH) plays a sequence of notes: G4 (finger 4), A4 (finger 3), B4 (finger 3), followed by a whole rest. The second measure has G4 (finger 4), A4 (finger 3), B4 (finger 3), followed by a whole rest. The third measure has G4 (finger 4), A4 (finger 3), B4 (finger 2), followed by a whole rest. The left hand (LH) plays a triplet of notes: C4 (finger 3), B3 (finger 2), A3 (finger 3) in the first measure, followed by a whole rest. The second measure has C4 (finger 3), B3 (finger 2), A3 (finger 3) in the second measure, followed by a whole rest.



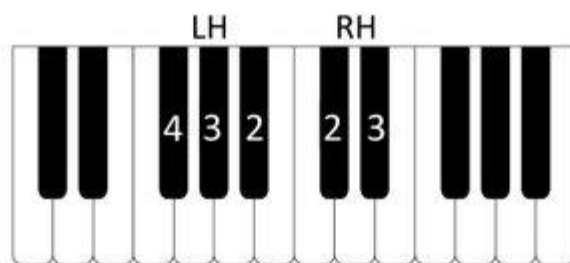
18

## Bloom

First system of musical notation for 'Bloom'. The right hand (RH) is in treble clef and the left hand (LH) is in bass clef. The RH part consists of four measures: the first measure is empty, the second has two notes (F4 and G4) with a '2' above each, the third has two notes (A4 and G4) with a '3' above the first and a '2' above the second, and the fourth is empty. The LH part consists of four measures: the first has three notes (C3, D3, E3) with '2', '3', and '4' below them, the second is empty, the third has three notes (F3, G3, A3) with '2', '3', and '4' below them, and the fourth is empty.

Second system of musical notation for 'Bloom'. The RH part consists of four measures: the first is empty, the second has two notes (F4 and G4) with '2' and '3' above them, the third has two notes (A4 and G4) with '2' above the first and '3' above the second, and the fourth is empty. The LH part consists of four measures: the first has four notes (C3, D3, E3, F3) with '4', '3', '2', and '3' below them, the second is empty, the third has four notes (G3, A3, B3, C4) with '2', '3', '4', and '4' below them, and the fourth has two notes (D4, C4) with '3' and '3' below them.

Third system of musical notation for 'Bloom'. The RH part consists of four measures: the first is empty, the second has two notes (F4 and G4) with '2' and '2' above them, the third has two notes (A4 and G4) with '3' and '2' above them, and the fourth is empty. The LH part consists of four measures: the first has three notes (C3, D3, E3) with '2', '3', and '4' below them, the second is empty, the third has two notes (F3, G3) with '2' and '3' below them, and the fourth has two notes (A3, G3) with '4' and '4' below them. A red octagonal 'STOP' sign is placed at the end of the system.



## My Mittens

Mittens for the snow time, when the world is white  
Mittens for my two hands, Mittens left and mittens right.  
Mittens with a thumb place, Mittens warm and snug.  
Mittens make me feel like, a bug inside a rug!

---

Dynamics - music can be loud or quiet

The sound is quiet.

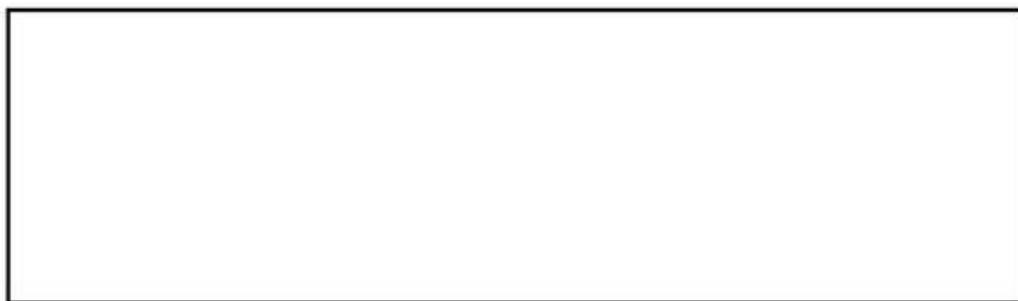
*piano*     ***p***

The sound is loud.

*forte*     ***f***

---

Draw a picture of something that is piano.

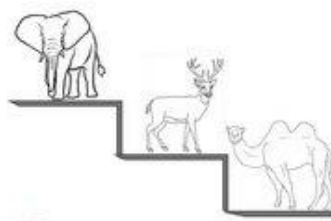
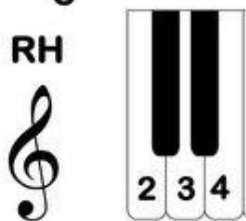
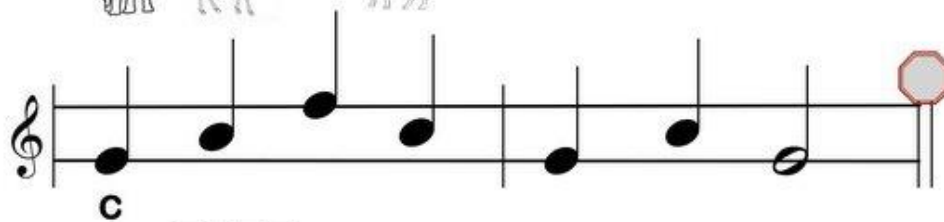
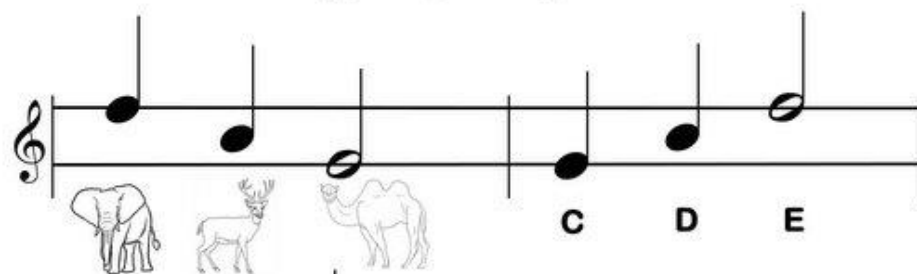
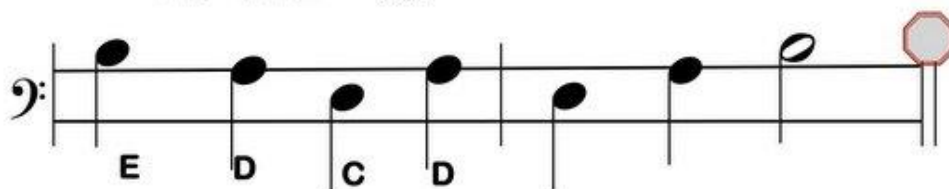
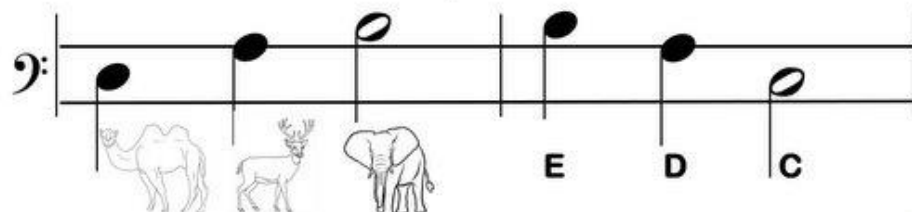
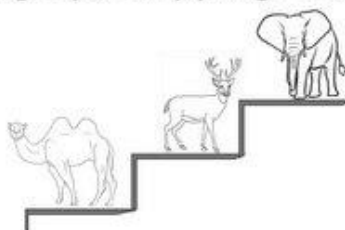
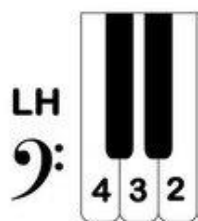


Draw a picture of something that is forte .



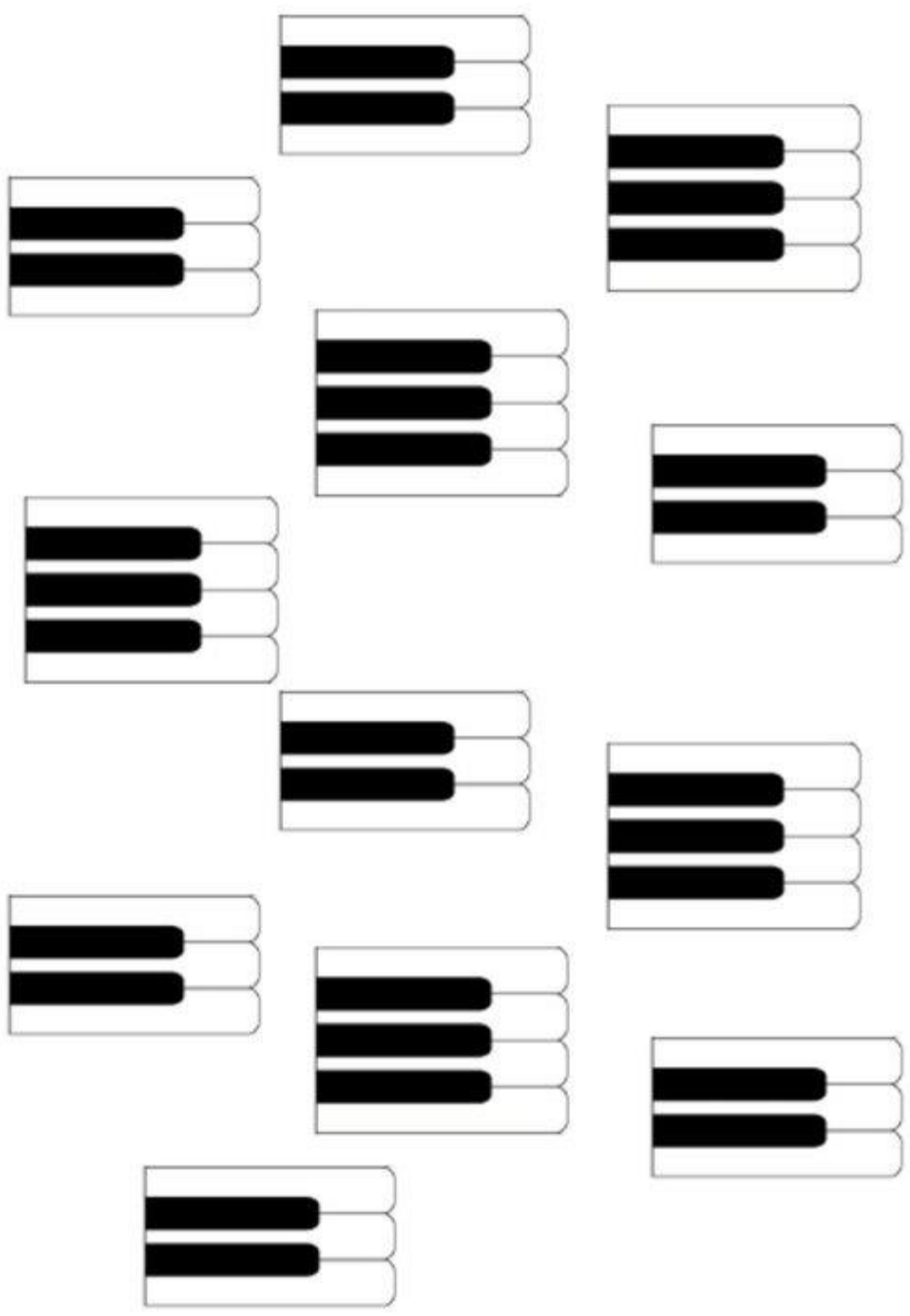
20

## Stepping Up, Stepping Down

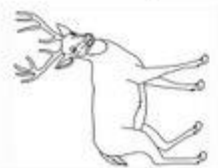
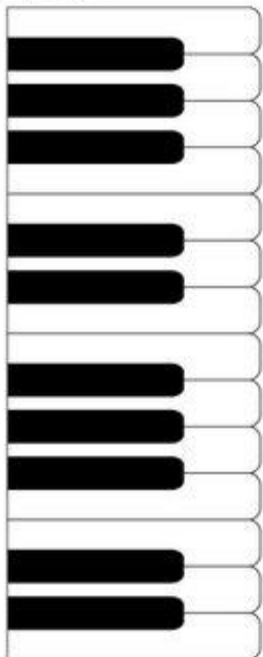


Circle the groups of 2 black keys/2 trees and then label the Deer/D key.  
Next, label where the Elephant/E and Camel/C live.

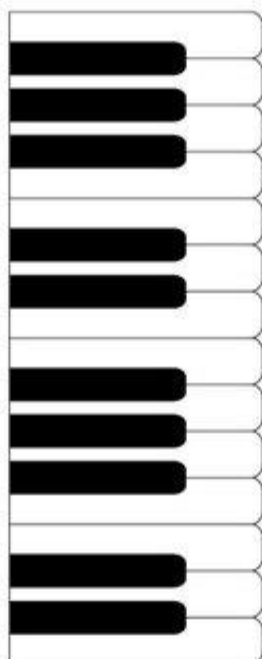
---



Colour the D keys.



Colour the C keys.



Colour the E keys.



Name the starred keys. Write the letter name in the box.



## Bounce High



Bounce



high



bounce



low



Bounce the



ball



to



Mex



i



co.



Bounce



high,



bounce



low.



Bounce



the



ball



to



Mex

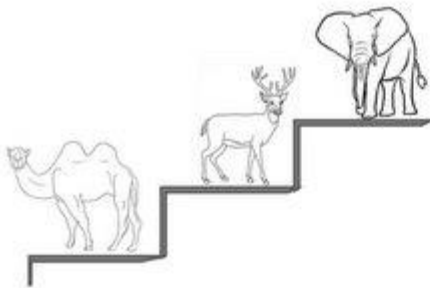


i

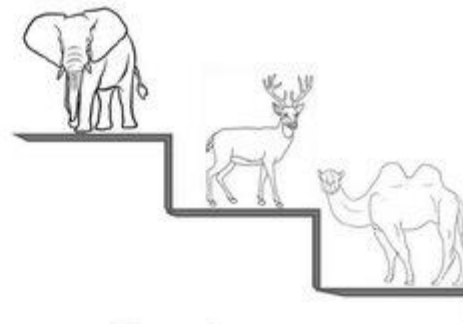


co.

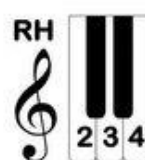
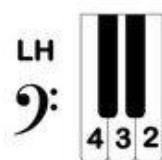
## Step-ping Up



## Step-ping Down



## 24 Steps



D E D

D C D

**Who Comes Next?** - fill in the missing letters on the steps

E

C

G

A



**More Steps!**

The image shows two musical staves. The top staff is for the Right Hand (RH) in treble clef, with a keyboard diagram above it showing fingers 1-5 on keys C-E-G-A-B. The notes are C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4. Below the staff are illustrations of a turtle, bear, camel, deer, elephant, deer, and camel. The bottom staff is for the Left Hand (LH) in bass clef, with a keyboard diagram above it showing fingers 5-4-3-2-1 on keys G-F-E-D-C. The notes are G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2. Below the staff are illustrations of an elephant, deer, camel, bear, turtle, bear, and turtle. A red octagon is at the end of the bottom staff.

**Moving by Steps and Skips**

When we step we use the very next finger, but when we skip we must skip a finger!

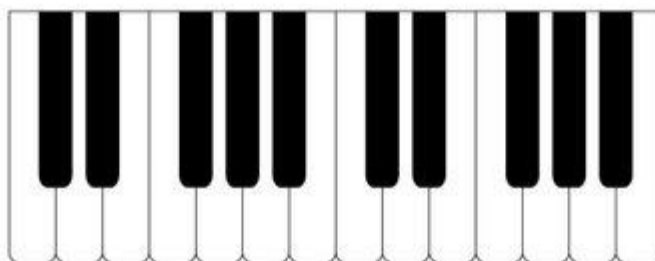
The diagram shows a staircase-like path on a keyboard. On the left, labeled 'Stepping', the path goes up from A to B, B to C, C to D, and D to E, with animal illustrations (turtle, bear, camel, deer, elephant) on each step. On the right, labeled 'Skipping', the path goes down from E to C, skipping D, and then from C to A, skipping B. A keyboard diagram on the right shows keys A, B, C, D, E.

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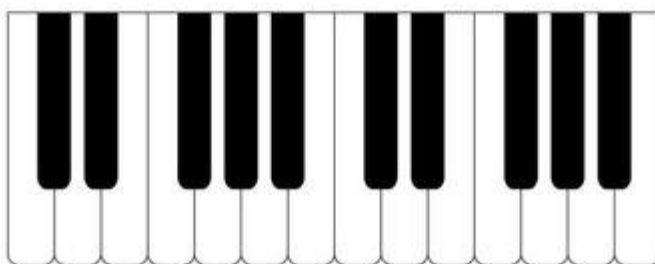
Colour all  
of the  
D keys.



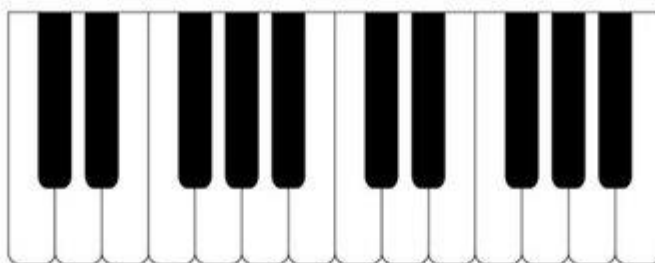
Colour all  
of the  
C keys.



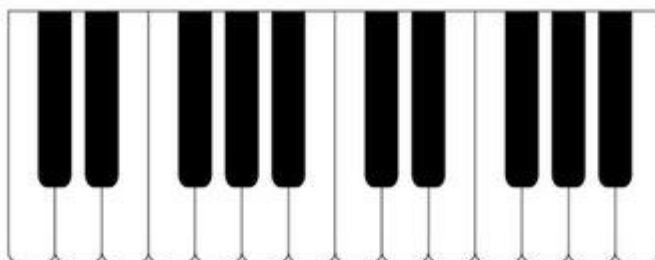
Colour all  
of the  
E keys.



Colour all  
of the  
B keys.




Colour all  
of the  
A keys.

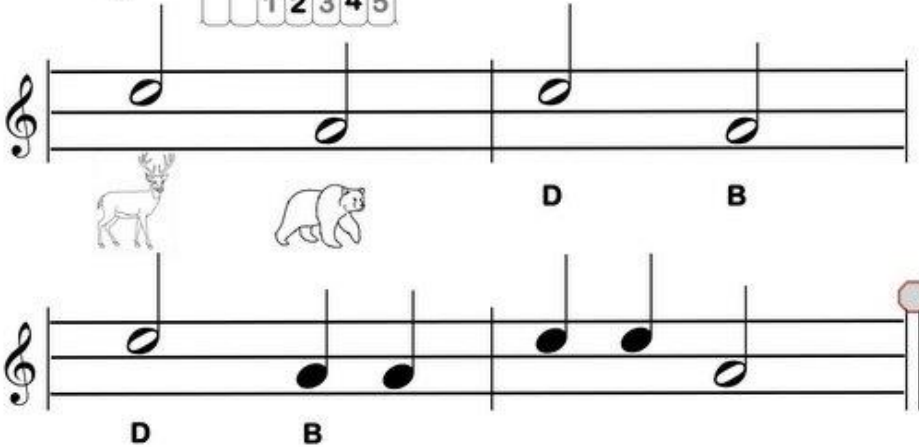


## Starlight, Starbright

RH




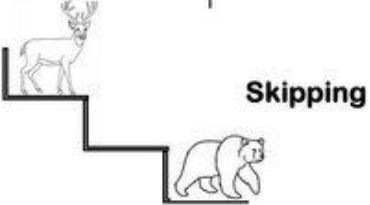
REMEMBER: When we skip a key, we must skip a finger!



D B

D B

LH

Skipping

28

**Bounce High, Bounce Low**

Steps and skips!  
Remember, when we skip a key,  
we must skip a finger.

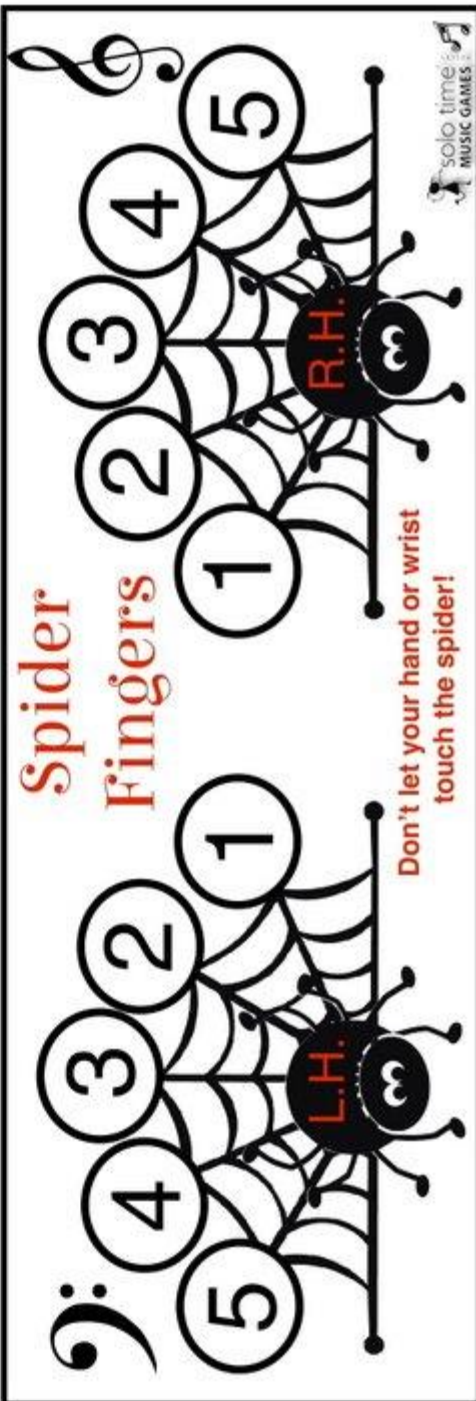


**See Saw** When we skip a key, we must skip a finger.  
If we skip 2 keys, we skip 2 fingers!

LH

R.H.                    L.H.                    R.H.  
 1 2 3 3 2 1        1 2 3 3 2 1        1 2 3 4 5

L.H.                    R.H.                    L.H.  
 1 2 3 4 5            5 4 3 2 1 1        5 4 3 2 1 1



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## Appendix C

Advertisement for participant recruitment

### **Free Music Lessons for New Immigrants**



Is your family a new immigrant to Canada?

Do you have children who speak limited English?

We are looking for children between the ages of 6 to 10 years old who have recently arrived in Canada (up two years) and who speak a language other than English at home. We are offering:

- Free weekly music/piano lessons for two months
- Lessons will take place in a music studio in NW of Calgary
- Teacher is a Canadian music instructor (PhD in Education)

Responsibilities include:

- Practice at home on any inexpensive piano keyboard
- Participate in the University of Calgary research project

A maximum of 8 students will qualify. E-mail right now!

If you are interested in taking part in this research or would like more information please, contact the researcher Ms. Julianne de Siqueira at [julianne.desiqueira@ucalgary.ca](mailto:julianne.desiqueira@ucalgary.ca). Participants will be anonymous. Note: This research proposal is approved by the Ethics Board from University of Calgary.