



OPEN ACCESS

EDITED BY

Annalisa Valle,
Catholic University of the Sacred Heart,
Italy

REVIEWED BY

Marianne Jover,
Aix-Marseille Université, France
Pauline Beaupoil-Hourdel,
Sorbonne Universités, France

*CORRESPONDENCE

Soledad Carretero Pérez
✉ soledad.carretero@udima.es

RECEIVED 24 March 2026

REVISED 14 May 2026

ACCEPTED 28 May 2026

PUBLISHED xx xx 2026

CITATION

Carretero Pérez S, de la Cueva Ortega MM, Moreno Jusdado D and Moya Cano A (2026) Teacher–infant interactions in early childhood education and care: a review from an embodied, intersubjective, and multimodal perspective. *Front. Educ.* 11:1837905. doi:

COPYRIGHT

© 2026 Carretero Pérez, de la Cueva Ortega, Moreno Jusdado and Moya Cano. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License \(CC BY\)](#). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.

Teacher–infant interactions in early childhood education and care: a review from an embodied, intersubjective, and multimodal perspective

Soledad Carretero Pérez*, María Mar de la Cueva Ortega, Débora Moreno Jusdado and Alba Moya Cano

Department of Education, Universidad a Distancia de Madrid, Madrid, Spain

This narrative review examines multimodal interactions between teachers and infants and toddlers aged 0–3 years in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings. It focuses on dyadic teacher–infant interactions from embodied and intersubjective perspectives, with particular attention to nonverbal and prelinguistic forms of exchange. Early communication is inherently multimodal, integrating visual, tactile, rhythmic, vocal, and affective dimensions. This perspective has gained relevance in recent decades, partly through the development of embodied approaches in developmental psychology and, more specifically, through the framework of communicative musicality. However, although educational quality during the first years of life depends substantially on teachers’ relational competence and responsiveness, research in educational settings remains limited compared with the extensive literature on adult–infant interaction in family contexts. The findings indicate that the field is still incipient, with a clear predominance of qualitative, especially ethnographic, studies and limited use of quantitative, longitudinal, and microanalytic designs. Key gaps include the scarcity of research on children under one year of age and the methodological complexity of analyzing both dyadic and group dynamics in ECEC. The review argues that strengthening empirical research and incorporating tools such as video feedback may improve teacher education and educational practice. Future studies should examine how educators sustain intersubjective connection through multimodal resources such as gaze, proximity, bodily orientation, rhythm, and affect attunement, while also exploring care routines as privileged contexts for early interaction.

KEYWORDS

adult responsiveness, communicative musicality, early childhood education and care (ECEC), intersubjective interaction, multimodal interaction, nonverbal communication, teacher-infant interaction

1 Introduction

We present a critical narrative review aimed at integrating and analyzing relevant literature, prioritizing interpretive depth and contextualization of the topic (Ferrari, 2015; Grant and Booth, 2009; Snyder, 2019). We focus on studies of intersubjective, multimodal, non-semiotic dyadic teacher-infant interactions in Early Childhood