

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background of the study**

Teaching is a process of interaction between teachers and students that aims to facilitate learning and achieve educational objectives. According to Harmer (2007), teaching is not merely the transmission of knowledge but also the creation of conditions that enable students to learn effectively. In this process, teachers play multiple roles as facilitators, motivators, and communicators who help students understand learning materials through various instructional strategies. Effective teaching requires teachers to establish meaningful interaction with students and to deliver messages in ways that are appropriate to learners' characteristics and needs. Therefore, communication becomes an essential element in the teaching and learning process.

In the context of English language teaching, communication plays a significant role because English is often learned as a foreign language. Teachers are required to convey information, instructions, and explanations in ways that are understandable and meaningful to students. This challenge becomes more apparent when teaching young learners, who possess different cognitive, linguistic, and emotional characteristics from adolescent or adult learners. According to Cameron (2001), young learners tend to learn more effectively through concrete experiences, visual support, physical activities, and meaningful interaction. Similarly, Scott and Ytreberg (1990) state that children have relatively short attention spans and respond positively to learning activities that involve movement, repetition, and active participation. Consequently, teachers need to employ communication strategies that can support young learners in understanding classroom instruction and participating in learning activities.

One important aspect of classroom communication is non-verbal communication. According to Mehrabian (1972), non-verbal communication refers to the transmission of messages through facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, body movement, voice intonation, and other non-linguistic cues. In educational settings, non-verbal communication functions as a complementary tool that supports verbal communication and facilitates classroom interaction. Through non-verbal behaviors, teachers can emphasize meaning, attract students' attention, express emotions, manage classroom activities, and create a positive learning atmosphere. As a result, non-verbal communication becomes an integral part of effective teaching practices.

For young learners, non-verbal communication is particularly important because children often rely on visual and contextual cues to understand messages. Gestures, facial expressions, and body movements can help teachers communicate meaning more clearly and make learning activities more engaging. Furthermore, non-verbal communication allows teachers to maintain interaction with students even when verbal explanations alone may not be sufficient. Therefore, understanding how teachers use non-verbal communication in English language teaching is important, especially in classrooms involving young learners.

Several previous studies have highlighted the significance of non-verbal communication in educational contexts. Goldin-Meadow (2020) found that gestures play an important role in supporting communication and language learning processes. Similarly, Wang and Loewen (2021) reported that teachers frequently use gestures during language instruction to facilitate classroom communication and clarify meaning. In addition, Zhang and Zhang (2021) emphasized that non-verbal communication contributes to more effective classroom interaction by supporting teacher-student communication. These studies demonstrate that non-verbal communication is an essential component of teaching practices. However, most previous studies have been conducted in general educational

contexts or have focused on specific aspects of non-verbal communication, particularly gestures.

Despite the growing interest in non-verbal communication, studies focusing specifically on English teaching for young learners remain limited. Furthermore, there is still a need for qualitative research that explores how teachers use various forms of non-verbal communication in authentic classroom settings. Understanding these practices is important because young learners possess unique learning characteristics that require appropriate communication strategies from teachers.

Based on these considerations, this study investigates teachers' non-verbal communication in teaching English to young learners. The study focuses on identifying the types of non-verbal communication used by the teacher and examining how these non-verbal behaviors are employed during classroom interaction. Through classroom observation and interviews, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the role of non-verbal communication in English language teaching and contribute to the development of effective teaching practices for young learners.

## **B. Research problem**

In English learning for young learners, students often face difficulties in understanding instructional language and maintaining classroom engagement due to their limited vocabulary and short attention spans. In many classroom situations, verbal explanation alone is not sufficient to ensure students' comprehension, especially when the language used is still unfamiliar. As a result, students may hesitate, lose focus, or show low participation during learning activities. Teachers frequently use nonverbal communication such as gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, body movement, and voice tone during instruction; however, its role in supporting students' comprehension and engagement has not been fully explored in a systematic manner. Therefore, it is important to investigate how teachers' nonverbal

communication functions in English learning for young learners. Based on this problem, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What types of non-verbal communication are used by the teacher in teaching English to young learners?
2. How does the teacher use non-verbal communication in teaching English to young learners?
3. Why does the teacher use non-verbal communication in teaching English to young learners?

### **C. Research Objectives**

Based on the research questions formulated in this study, the primary objective of this research is to investigate teachers' non-verbal communication in teaching English to young learners. This study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how non-verbal communication is utilized by teachers during the teaching and learning process and how it supports classroom interaction in English language instruction. Specifically, this study aims:

1. To identify the types of non-verbal communication employed by the teacher in teaching English to young learners, including gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, body movement, and voice intonation.
2. To analyze the ways in which the teacher utilizes non-verbal communication during English teaching and learning activities in order to facilitate classroom interaction and instructional delivery.
3. To explore the teacher's reasons for employing various forms of non-verbal communication in teaching English to young learners and to understand the significance of such communication within the learning process.

### **D. Benefits of research**

#### **1. Theoretical Significance**

This study is expected to contribute to the development of knowledge in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT),

particularly in relation to teachers' non-verbal communication in young learners' classrooms. The findings of this study may enrich the existing body of literature by providing empirical evidence regarding the types and use of non-verbal communication employed by teachers during English instruction. Furthermore, this study is expected to enhance theoretical understanding of classroom communication by highlighting the role of non-verbal behaviors as an integral component of teaching practices. Since young learners rely heavily on visual and contextual cues in the learning process, this research may also provide valuable insights into how non-verbal communication functions within English language teaching for children. Therefore, this study is anticipated to contribute to the advancement of theories related to classroom interaction, educational communication, and English language teaching for young learners.

## **2. Practical Significance**

The results of this study are expected to provide practical benefits for several parties, as follows:

### **a. For Teachers**

The findings of this study are expected to increase teachers' awareness of the importance of non-verbal communication in English language teaching. By understanding how gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, body movement, and voice intonation are utilized during classroom instruction, teachers may be encouraged to employ these communicative strategies more consciously and effectively to support teaching and classroom interaction.

### **b. For Students**

This study is expected to contribute to the creation of a more interactive and supportive learning environment for young learners. Effective use of non-verbal communication may help students become more responsive and engaged during classroom

activities, thereby facilitating a more meaningful learning experience.

**c. For Educational Institutions**

The results of this study may serve as a valuable reference for schools and language learning institutions in understanding the importance of non-verbal communication in teaching practices. The findings can be utilized to support teacher development programs and improve the overall quality of English language instruction for young learners.

**d. For Future Researchers**

This study is expected to provide a useful reference for future researchers who are interested in investigating non-verbal communication, classroom interaction, and English language teaching. In addition, the findings may serve as a foundation for further studies conducted in different educational contexts, learner levels, or research designs.