

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theoretical Framework

1. Teaching in EFL Context

Teaching is commonly understood as a planned and systematic process through which teachers facilitate students in gaining knowledge, developing skills, and achieving learning objectives through classroom interaction and instructional activities. In educational contexts, teaching is not merely the act of transferring information from teachers to students, but also a process of guiding learners to actively construct understanding through meaningful experiences. Brown (2007) defines teaching as an activity that helps someone learn by giving instruction, guidance, and opportunities for practice. Similarly, Harmer (2007) explains that teaching involves creating conditions in which learning can occur effectively and meaningfully according to students' needs and abilities. In addition, Richards and Rodgers (2014) state that effective teaching requires appropriate methods, classroom interaction, and communication strategies that support students' participation during the learning process. These theories indicate that teaching is a multidimensional process involving interaction, facilitation, communication, and pedagogical planning to support successful learning outcomes.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), teaching has more complex challenges because English is not commonly used in students' daily communication outside the classroom. As a result, the classroom becomes one of the primary environments where students are exposed to English input and language interaction. According to Harmer (2007), EFL teaching should not only focus on grammar and vocabulary mastery but also encourage students to use language communicatively in meaningful contexts. This view is supported by Brown (2007), who

argues that language learning becomes more effective when learners actively participate in communicative interaction rather than only receiving passive explanation. Furthermore, Richards (2022) explains that successful EFL teaching requires teachers to create supportive classroom environments that promote confidence, participation, and interaction among learners. Therefore, EFL teaching emphasizes not only linguistic competence but also the creation of communicative experiences that help students use language meaningfully and naturally.

Moreover, the success of teaching in EFL classrooms is strongly influenced by the teacher's ability to build interaction and maintain students' engagement during the learning process. Vygotsky (1978) explains through the social interaction theory that learning occurs more effectively when students interact with more knowledgeable individuals, such as teachers, within supportive social contexts. This perspective highlights the importance of classroom communication in helping learners understand and internalize new knowledge. In addition,

Krashen (1985) states that language acquisition occurs when learners receive comprehensible input that is slightly above their current language level and supported by meaningful context. In EFL classrooms, teachers often need to combine verbal explanation with visual support, gestures, and interactive strategies to ensure that students understand instructional language effectively. Therefore, teaching in EFL contexts requires teachers to use communicative, interactive, and supportive approaches that facilitate meaningful classroom communication and instructional interaction throughout the learning process.

Recent studies also strengthen the importance of interactive teaching practices in EFL learning environments. Zhang and Zhang (2022) found that interactive teaching approaches promote more effective classroom interaction and communication because students become more actively involved in learning activities. Similarly, Shin and Crandall (2021) explain that effective teaching for language learners

should integrate meaningful interaction, visual support, and contextualized communication to maintain students' motivation and understanding. In addition, Derakhshan (2021) emphasizes that classroom interaction supported by positive teacher communication contributes to students' emotional involvement and learning participation. These findings indicate that successful teaching is closely related to how teachers manage classroom interaction and communication during instruction. Therefore, teachers are expected to employ communicative strategies that foster meaningful learning experiences and support students' language acquisition effectively.

2. Characteristics of Young Learners

Young learners are children who are in the early stages of cognitive, emotional, social, and language development, and these developmental characteristics strongly influence the way they learn a foreign language. In the context of English language teaching, young learners are generally categorized as children at the elementary school level who learn best through active participation, concrete experiences, and meaningful interaction. According to Cameron (2001), children do not learn language through abstract analysis alone, but through direct experiences and contextualized activities that help them connect meaning with real situations.

Similarly, Pinter (2017) explains that young learners require learning environments that are interactive, enjoyable, and supportive because they are still developing their cognitive and linguistic abilities. In addition, Shin and Crandall (2021) state that children are naturally curious learners who respond positively to visual input, games, songs, stories, and physical movement during classroom activities. These theories indicate that teaching young learners requires approaches that are communicative, engaging, and appropriate to their developmental characteristics.

One of the most important characteristics of young learners is their tendency to learn more effectively through visual and physical

experiences rather than through abstract verbal explanation. Children are generally more responsive to gestures, pictures, facial expressions, demonstrations, and real objects because such elements help them understand meaning more concretely. Cameron (2001) emphasizes that young learners understand language more successfully when it is supported by contextual clues and meaningful interaction. This view is supported by Scott and Ytreberg (1990), who explain that children have limited ability to understand abstract concepts and therefore need teaching activities that involve movement, repetition, and sensory experiences. Furthermore, Shin and Crandall (2021) argue that multimodal input, including gestures and visual support, significantly contributes to classroom communication and supports meaningful learning experiences for young learners. Therefore, teachers need to integrate visual and interactive elements into classroom instruction to facilitate communication and interaction during the learning process.

Another important characteristic of young learners is their relatively short attention span, which affects their ability to remain focused during classroom activities. Children easily lose concentration when learning activities are repetitive, monotonous, or excessively teacher centered. According to Pinter (2017), young learners require varied and stimulating activities to maintain their interest and participation during the learning process. In addition, Slattery and Willis (2001) explain that children learn more effectively when they are emotionally involved and actively engaged in classroom interaction. This means that teachers must create enjoyable learning environments that encourage students to participate actively and confidently. Consequently, teaching strategies for young learners should include interactive activities, movement, games, and supportive communication to encourage active participation and meaningful classroom interaction throughout the lesson.

Young learners also tend to rely heavily on teacher guidance and classroom interaction in understanding instructional language,

especially in EFL contexts where English is not commonly used outside the classroom. Since their vocabulary knowledge and language proficiency are still limited, children often depend on contextual support and nonverbal cues to interpret meaning during instruction. Vygotsky (1978) explains through social interaction theory that children develop knowledge and language through interaction with more knowledgeable individuals, including teachers.

In language learning contexts, this interaction becomes essential because students acquire understanding through communicative support provided by the teacher. Recent studies also reveal that nonverbal communication such as gestures, facial expressions, and body movement helps young learners process language input more effectively and maintain classroom engagement (Shin & Crandall, 2021). Therefore, understanding the characteristics of young learners is essential for teachers in designing effective English learning activities that support students' comprehension and participation.

3. Nonverbal Communication in Teaching

Nonverbal communication is an essential component of classroom interaction that supports the delivery of meaning without depending entirely on spoken language. In educational contexts, nonverbal communication includes gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, body movement, posture, physical distance, and voice tone that accompany verbal instruction during the teaching and learning process. According to Albert Mehrabian (1972), communication is strongly influenced by nonverbal elements because messages are often interpreted not only through words but also through visual and vocal expressions.

Similarly, Ray Birdwhistell (1970) explains that body movement and facial expression function as important communication systems that help individuals interpret social interaction more effectively. In classroom settings, these nonverbal elements become meaningful instructional tools because they help students understand teachers'

intentions, emotions, and directions during learning activities. Therefore, nonverbal communication is not merely a complementary aspect of teaching, but also an important pedagogical component that influences classroom interaction and learning effectiveness.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, nonverbal communication becomes increasingly important because students often experience limitations in vocabulary and language comprehension. When students are unfamiliar with the instructional language used by the teacher, they tend to rely on visual and contextual clues to interpret meaning. According to David McNeill (1992), gestures and body movement help learners connect spoken language with meaning because visual representation supports cognitive processing during communication. This view is also supported by Lev Vygotsky (1978), who emphasizes that social interaction and contextual support are essential in helping children construct understanding during the learning process.

In addition, Marianne Gullberg (2006) explains that gestures provide additional semantic information that facilitates second language comprehension and retention. Consequently, teachers' nonverbal communication functions as a bridge that connects unfamiliar language input with students' understanding in EFL classrooms.

Several scholars also highlight that nonverbal communication contributes significantly to students' classroom engagement and emotional involvement during learning activities. According to Judee K. Burgoon (2016), nonverbal behavior affects interpersonal interaction because it communicates attitudes, emotions, immediacy, and attention. In educational settings, teacher immediacy behaviors such as smiling, eye contact, open posture, and expressive voice tone create a more supportive classroom atmosphere and encourage students to participate actively. James C. McCroskey and Virginia P. Richmond (1992) further explain that nonverbal immediacy strengthens teacher–student

relationships and positively influences students' motivation and learning attitudes.

Recent research by Derakhshan (2021) also reveals that teachers' nonverbal immediacy significantly increases students' classroom engagement and participation in EFL learning environments. Therefore, nonverbal communication not only supports classroom communication but also helps establish positive interaction and effective communication between teachers and students during classroom activities.

In teaching young learners, nonverbal communication becomes even more important because children respond more naturally to visual and physical stimuli than to abstract verbal explanation. Young learners often interpret meaning through teachers' gestures, facial expressions, and body movement before fully understanding verbal language. According to Joan Kang Shin and JoAnn Crandall (2021), children learn more effectively when instruction is supported by multimodal communication involving visual, auditory, and physical interaction.

Similarly, Lynne Cameron (2001) explains that children require meaningful and contextualized interaction to understand language naturally. In addition, recent studies indicate that gestures, eye contact, and body movement help young learners remain focused and actively engaged during English lessons (Wulandari et al., 2024). Therefore, the integration of nonverbal communication into classroom instruction is highly important in facilitating classroom interaction and supporting effective communication in English language teaching for young learners.

Recent empirical studies also confirm the pedagogical importance of nonverbal communication in language learning contexts. Research conducted by Wahyuni et al. (2025) demonstrates that teachers' eye contact, gestures, and movement play an important role in supporting classroom communication and facilitating teacher–student interaction during English lessons. Similarly, Goldin-Meadow (2020) explains that gestures help learners visualize meaning and support

communication during instructional interaction. Another study by Wang and Loewen (2021) reveals that teachers frequently use gestures unconsciously to clarify meaning and support classroom communication.

These findings indicate that nonverbal communication functions not only as spontaneous behavior but also as a strategic instructional tool that facilitates language learning. Moreover, effective use of nonverbal communication creates more interactive and meaningful classroom environments where students feel more comfortable participating in learning activities. Thus, nonverbal communication plays a central role in facilitating effective classroom communication and supporting English teaching practices for young learners.

4. Types of Teachers' Nonverbal Communication

Teachers employ various types of nonverbal communication during instructional activities, including gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, body movement, and voice modulation. Each of these forms serves a specific purpose in supporting the teaching and learning process. Gestures are often used to represent meaning visually and simplify abstract concepts for learners. Facial expressions help convey emotions and maintain students' interest during classroom interaction. Eye contact plays a vital role in managing attention and fostering communication between teachers and students. Research findings indicate that these nonverbal behaviors significantly contribute to improving students' comprehension and engagement (Wulandari et al., 2024).

B. Previous Studies

Previous studies have discussed the importance of nonverbal communication in English language teaching, particularly in classroom interaction and language learning processes. Nonverbal communication refers to communication delivered without words, such as gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, body movement, and voice intonation. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Classrooms, teachers frequently use nonverbal communication to support verbal explanations, maintain students' attention, and facilitate interaction during the learning process. For young learners, nonverbal communication becomes even more important because children tend to respond more actively to visual and physical expressions during classroom activities. Therefore, many researchers have attempted to investigate the role of nonverbal communication in language teaching from different perspectives and educational contexts.

Goldin-Meadow (2020), in her study entitled *Gesture and Language Learning* published in *Annual Review of Linguistics*, investigated the role of gestures in language learning and communication processes. The study employed a literature review method by synthesizing findings from previous empirical studies related to gesture use in educational settings. The findings revealed that gestures significantly support language learning by helping learners understand meaning more clearly and reinforcing verbal input through visual representation. In addition, gestures were found to facilitate communication and improve interaction during the learning process. The study emphasized that gestures are not merely additional movements but function as meaningful communicative tools in language learning. However, the research focused mainly on cognitive and theoretical perspectives rather than examining authentic classroom interaction involving young learners.

Wang and Loewen (2021), in their study entitled *Teachers' Gestures in Second Language Acquisition Classrooms* published in *Language Teaching Research*, explored how teachers use gestures during second language instruction. The study used an observational approach to analyze naturally occurring classroom interaction in language learning environments. The

findings indicated that teachers frequently use gestures to clarify meaning, explain vocabulary, and support students' understanding during instruction. Furthermore, gestures were identified as an important component of teacher communication because they help students interpret verbal messages more effectively. The study also revealed that teachers often use gestures unconsciously during classroom interaction. Nevertheless, the research focused primarily on gestures and did not comprehensively discuss other aspects of nonverbal communication such as eye contact, facial expressions, and voice intonation.

Similarly, Zhang and Zhang (2021), in their study published in *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, investigated the role of teachers' nonverbal communication in English classroom interaction. The researchers employed a qualitative approach to observe communication behaviors used by teachers during classroom activities. The findings demonstrated that nonverbal communication contributes significantly to classroom interaction by creating a more active and communicative learning atmosphere. The study also highlighted that facial expressions, gestures, and body movement help teachers maintain students' attention and facilitate communication during instruction. However, the study was conducted in general EFL classroom settings and did not specifically focus on teaching English to young learners.

In another study, Derakhshan (2021), through the article entitled *Teacher Nonverbal Immediacy and Student Engagement* published in *Frontiers in Psychology*, examined the importance of teachers' nonverbal behaviors in classroom interaction. The study adopted a theoretical and empirical review approach to discuss various forms of teacher nonverbal communication in educational contexts. The findings showed that nonverbal communication such as eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, and body movement positively contributes to classroom interaction and helps create a supportive learning environment. The study emphasized that nonverbal communication can reduce psychological distance between teachers and students and improve communication effectiveness during classroom activities. However, the research mainly focused on engagement and

psychological aspects rather than specifically investigating nonverbal communication practices among young learners.

Li and Wang (2023), in their study entitled *Multimodal Teaching in EFL Classrooms* published in *System*, explored the implementation of multimodal communication in English language teaching. The study employed a mixed-method approach involving classroom observation and interviews to analyze communication practices in EFL classrooms. The findings revealed that combining verbal and nonverbal communication creates more effective classroom interaction and supports teaching delivery during learning activities. Visual and physical elements such as gestures, movement, and facial expressions were considered important in helping students follow classroom instruction. Nevertheless, the study discussed communication multimodality broadly and did not specifically investigate teacher's nonverbal communication as the central focus of analysis.

Based on the previous studies above, it can be concluded that nonverbal communication plays an important role in English language teaching and classroom interaction. Most studies indicate that gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and body movement help teachers support communication and facilitate learning processes in EFL classrooms. However, several gaps can still be identified. First, previous studies mostly focus on general classroom settings rather than specifically investigating young learners. Second, many studies only discuss certain aspects of nonverbal communication, particularly gestures, without examining nonverbal communication more comprehensively. Third, qualitative studies focusing on authentic classroom interaction involving young learners remain limited. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate teacher's nonverbal communication in teaching English to young learners through a qualitative approach. The study focuses on identifying the types of nonverbal communication used by the teacher and exploring how nonverbal communication is applied during classroom interaction in English learning activities.