CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Every day, early childhood English teachers step into a classroom full of unpredictable energy. The experience of teaching English to toddlers is not just about delivering a lesson; it is a complex, daily journey filled with emotional labor, physical exhaustion, and spontaneous problem-solving. Teachers are the ones who face the real situations on the ground: comforting crying children, handling sudden tantrums, bridging communication gaps, and experiencing the unique joy of hearing a toddler speak their first English word. This research is deeply interested in exploring these lived experiences. It seeks to understand the human side of teaching, focusing specifically on what educators actually feel, face, and do when handling a toddler class.

At Elite English Course, the teachers' experiences are strongly shaped by the specific teaching method they are required to use: the Communicative and Interactive Approach. In this setting, teachers cannot simply ask the children to sit quietly and read a textbook. Instead, their teaching experience involves constantly building an active, playful, and engaging environment. Theories of language learning support this necessity. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), this approach is rooted in Communicative Language

Teaching (CLT) that prioritizes real social interaction. For the teachers, this means their daily experience requires a highly demanding physical and mental performance, where they must constantly use songs, games, and physical movements to teach English effectively (Pinter, 2006).

The teachers' experiences become even more challenging because of the unique nature of their students. Toddlers possess specific psychological and developmental characteristics that force the teachers to constantly adapt. According to Cameron (2001), young children learn implicitly, meaning the teacher must create natural meaning rather than explaining language rules. Furthermore, toddlers understand the world mostly through their senses and physical actions (Piaget, 1964), while naturally having very short attention spans and high emotional volatility (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). Because of this, the teacher's experience goes far beyond traditional teaching; they must act as a caregiver, an entertainer, and a guide. Based on Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory, the teacher serves as the "more knowledgeable other" who must provide continuous social interaction and support to help the toddlers learn.

Despite the intense daily experiences of these teachers, their stories are rarely heard. Most studies in early childhood education only focus on the students, looking at children's vocabulary scores or testing whether a teaching method works. The teachers' voices and personal struggles are often ignored.

Therefore, this study is conducted to put the spotlight directly on the educators. By using a narrative inquiry approach at Elite English Course, this research aims to explore the teachers' real teaching experiences, the specific challenges they encounter every day, and the creative strategies they rely on to survive and succeed in a communicative toddler classroom.

Understanding teachers' experiences who teach English in toddler class is really important to improve strategies in teaching and making sure that language learning is effective. In shaping the learning experience to the student, teacher has a vital role. By Allowing teachers to freely share their stories, reflections, and challenges, this study aims to provide an in-depth insight and understanding of their teaching experiences to early childhood. Sharing these experiences and stories is as equal as sharing knowledge, and this is so important because there is a verse from qur'an related to communication between child and parents, and hadiths related to giving knowledge and education to children. First, it is said in surah Luqman verse 13:

وَاِذْ قَالَ لُقْمٰنُ لِابْنِهٖ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهٗ يٰبُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ ۗاِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيْمٌ ١٣

Qur'an surah Luqman verse 13 was chosen because it presents an important example of communication between parent and child. In this verse,

Luqman uses the affectionate expression “Ya bunayya” (O my beloved son) when giving advice and teaching values to his child. This shows that education and guidance for children should be delivered with love, care, and gentle communication. Through this verse, Luqman not only teaches about tawhid and warns against shirk, but also demonstrates the importance of building emotional connection, ethics, and understanding in the learning process. Therefore, this verse is relevant to early childhood education because communication that is warm, interactive, and caring can help children feel safe, comfortable, and more receptive to learning.

second, a hadith related to giving knowledge and education to children:

عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ سَمُرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " لأَنْ يُؤَدِّبَ الرَّجُلُ وَلَدَهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَنْ يَتَصَدَّقَ بِصَاعٍ "

This hadith was chosen because it emphasizes the importance of providing education and guidance to children. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) highlighted that teaching one’s child is more valuable than giving charity, which shows that education is a meaningful and long-term investment for a child’s future. This hadith also reflects that children need proper guidance, attention, and learning experiences from adults in order to develop positively. In relation to this study, the hadith is relevant

because it supports the importance of teaching and educating young learners through meaningful communication, interaction, and supportive learning environments during early childhood.

Findings of this study will contribute to the growing body of research on early childhood English education, particularly in private language schools. It will be an evidence to the effectiveness of communicative interactive methods in toddler classes and it will offer practical recommendations for educators that seek enhancement to improve their teaching strategies. For addition, this research may help inform teacher training program, curriculum development, and educational policies to provide better support in English language instruction for young learners.

By focusing on the teachers' lived experiences, this research does not only highlight the pedagogical aspects of early English education but also recognizes the emotional and personal opinion of teaching toddlers. Understanding all of these factors may help us to create more supportive and effective learning environments for both students and teachers, it will lead to more successful language acquisition at an early age.

B. Definition of Key Terms

1. Communicative Interactive Method: A language teaching approach that emphasizes active engagement, two-way communication, and play-based social activities to help children acquire English naturally in a classroom setting.
2. Experience: In the context of this study, experiences refer to the practical encounters, pedagogical challenges, and instructional insights that teachers accumulate while teaching English to young learners.
3. Toddler: A toddler is a young child, typically aged between one and three years old, who is in the early foundational stages of cognitive and language development. But in this research, children until four years old are included.

C. Research Questions

1. What are teachers' experiences in teaching English to toddler class using communicative interactive method?
2. What are the challenges encountered by the teachers when teaching English in toddler class using communicative interactive method?
3. How do the teachers overcome the challenges when teaching toddler using communicative interactive method?

D. Objectives of Study

In line with the research questions, the objectives of this study are to explore and describe the teachers' experiences in teaching English to toddlers using the communicative and interactive approach at Elite English Course, to identify and analyze the pedagogical and psychological challenges faced by the teachers in implementing the method, and to investigate the strategies utilized by the teachers to overcome the challenges during the teaching and learning process.

E. Significance of Study

This study enriches the existing literature on Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). By centering on teachers' narratives and lived experiences, it provides real-world evidence of how educators personally navigate the intersection between language teaching theories and early childhood psychology.

The findings can serve as a reflective guide and emotional validation for early childhood English teachers. Hearing the lived experiences, struggles, and strategies of fellow educators can provide practical inspiration for handling unpredictable toddler behavior.

This study gives deep insights for course managers at Elite English Course to better understand their teachers' daily burdens, enabling them to provide better support, such as suitable teaching aids (*realia*) and toddler-friendly materials.

This study provides a qualitative baseline focusing on the educator’s reality, inspiring future researchers to value and investigate teachers' voices in language education studies.