

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background of the Study**

The study of English as a Foreign Language has become an essential aspect of education. In Thailand, English has been determined to be a foreign language taught as a compulsory subject in school or formal education (Trakulkasemsuk, 2018). Since 2009, the Basic Education Core Curriculum has been implemented as the national curriculum that students in Thai schools are required to study English lessons for 12 years from grade 1 to 12, while for university students, English subject is necessary for a minimum of 12 credits (Ministry of Education, 2008). Hence, English teachers need to master foreign language learning specifically since English has become the required subject in the national curriculum (Vibulphol et al., 2021).

Moreover, the recognition of the importance of English nowadays improves the number of English programs in most Thailand schools (Cuessta & Madrigal, 2014). Despite these innovative ideas and efforts to improve students' competence in the English language, it has been shown that Thai students' English ability is relatively low (Bolton, 2008; Bruner et al., 2015; Charoensap, 2017; Farrelly & Sinwongsuwat, 2021; Khamkhien, 2010; Teng & Sinwongsuwat, 2015). Although the learners have been studying English for 12 years, the results are still unsatisfactory. Phothongsunan (2014) concluded that the English teaching and

learning process in Thailand schools, even at the university level, may not achieve the curriculum's goal due to the unsatisfactory levels of English language ability, either in academic or professional contexts. This changed many people, who consider age to be the priority to start learning English, also known as young language learners (Prihatin, Ekawati, et al., 2021). Since young students are at the beginning of the learning process, they are taught and instructed at the basic level of English as a foreign language. In addition, focusing on the language itself, teaching young language learners also emphasizes other significant elements and characteristics that impact young learners' language acquisition (Orosz, 2007).

Teaching English as a foreign language to Thai young learners must be in a systematic approach that focuses on listening and speaking abilities while incorporating various enjoyable, interactive activities related to any movement or physical action that can stimulate them (Harmer, 2007; Shin, 2006). This was because Thai young learners tend to have difficulty in responding to a question since they do not understand what the inquiries mean, so that learners have to be aware of and understand what they are going to say or listen to in order to effectively react and respond to the interlocutor (Khamkhien, 2010).

According to Chanaroke & Niempmaan (2020), in trying to solve young learners' comprehension problems, most Thai EFL teachers in English for young learners apply teacher talk patterns in the classroom to explain briefly to the learners. The methods employed are grammar-translation and audiolingual. This causes inappropriate use of language and creates interaction failures in language classes.

Based on the preliminary observation of the fifth grade of elementary school at Suansanti School in Bangkok, it was found that Thai young learners tend to find it hard to learn and master the English language. During the teaching and learning process with 42 students in a class, the Thai English teacher taught by using the English language, but only a few students were able to respond to the teacher. It made the teacher mix the language with the Thai language to get the students to understand the lesson completely. The interaction between the teacher and the students in the English classroom showed that only a few students participated by responding to the teacher's question, while others seemed unconfident to speak or respond to the teacher in the English language and finally tended to be passive.

Researchers found some challenges faced by Thai young learners in learning English language including lack of opportunities to use the English language in daily life, low motivation, being passive learners in the classroom, uninteresting English lessons, lack of confidence to speak English, and the low responsibility towards their learning and education (Copland et al., 2014; Hayes, 2008; Noom-Ura, 2013; Orosz, 2007; Prihatin, Ekawati, et al., 2021; Ulla, 2018; Wiriyachitra, 2002).

According to (Chanaroke & Niempaan, 2020; Rasri, 2005), there are many factors contributing to the low English proficiency of Thai young learners, including teaching methods, students' effort, teacher's insufficient English language skills, classroom interaction, cultural knowledge, etc. However, it has been suggested that the teacher is the most crucial element in determining how well students will learn.

Classroom interactions are believed to be important in teaching and learning process. This is because classroom interaction involves a collaborative exchange which includes feelings or ideas delivered between a teacher and student or student and other student in the classroom interaction (Martina et al., 2021). According to Mardiyana et al. (2018), interaction between teacher and student can establish the success of the teaching and learning process.

Moreover, teachers' quality and interaction in the classroom are affected more significantly than other elements like financing and class size (Rasri, 2005). It can be concluded that modifying interaction patterns guides to varying the progression, while selecting and applying the appropriate pattern assists in achieving learning goals and increasing learning productivity. A considerable amount of classroom interaction researches focusing on teacher and student talk at the Secondary, Primary school, and University level has been conducted by (Farrelly & Sinwongsuwat, 2021; Hikmah, 2019; Mardiyana et al., 2018; Martina et al., 2021; Ramadhani, 2018; Sari, 2018; Selamat & Melji, 2022; Sundari, 2017; Teng & Sinwongsuwat, 2015), but little research focused on the patterns of classroom interaction applied in the Thai young learners' classroom.

This research concentrates on teaching English to Thai young learners, where the setting of this research has its own cultural and linguistic characteristics that affect teaching, and there's limited existing research in this area. By exploring how a Thai English teacher engages with EYL students, this research is expected to

reveal effective strategies and practical insights for educators teaching young learners in similar context.

### **B. Identification of the Problem**

Referring to the background of the study above, there are some problems identified as follows:

1. Students have difficulty in understanding what the teacher speaks in learning process
2. Students have lack of motivation to learn English language
3. Students seemed unconfident to speak and respond to the teacher using English language
4. The interaction between teacher and students are still low
5. The large classroom size influences classroom situations and interaction
6. The teaching methods applied by the teachers make the students tend to be less interested in paying attention to the learning process.

### **C. Limitation of the Problem**

Based on the identification of the problems above, the problem of the study is limited to the classroom interaction patterns applied by the Thai teacher in teaching the fifth grade of elementary school especially grade 5/2 at Suansanti School Bangkok.

#### **D. Formulation of the Problem**

Based on the limitation of the problem above, the questions of this research can be formulated as follows:

1. What are the types of classroom interaction patterns applied by the Thai English teacher at the fifth grade of Suansanti elementary school in Bangkok Thailand?
2. What is the dominant pattern of classroom interaction applied by the Thai English teacher in an English for young learner classroom?
3. What are the impacts on the EYL teaching and learning process by implementing the classroom interaction patterns applied by the Thai English teacher?

#### **E. Objective of the Study**

1. To explore the types of classroom interaction pattern applied by the Thai English teacher at the fifth grade of Suansanti elementary school in Bangkok, Thailand.
2. To find the dominant pattern of classroom interaction applied by the Thai English teacher in an English for young learner classroom.
3. To reveal the impacts of applying the classroom interaction patterns to the EYL teaching and learning.

## **F. Significance of the Study**

The researcher hopes that the implementation of this study will be helpful to the readers by conducting this study, and formulates the significance of the study as follows:

### 1. Theoretical significance

The findings of this study are expected to benefit the scope of English education and enrich scientific insight and comprehension, particularly into various types of classroom interaction pattern that can be applied in the English for young learners teaching and learning as part of English as a foreign language teaching.

### 2. Practical significance

Practically, it is hoped that the findings of this study can be useful:

#### a. For English teacher

The findings of this study can be used as a reference for teacher's performance while teaching English especially for young learners to improve the students' confidence that can make students are willing to interact to everyone in the classroom and create the new, attractive, also varied interactions so that there would be a good, fun and attractive interaction in the classroom during the teaching and learning process. It is also expected to make a positive contribution to the English for young learner teaching and learning.

#### b. For students

The findings of this study can motivate students to realize and aware of the small action and responds that can help to create a good interaction in the classroom, especially in EYL teaching and learning. Therefore, they need to be active, responsive, and practice more.

c. For other researchers

This study is expected to be able to offer new insight and comprehension for related and similar topics in future studies particularly in teaching English language education in Thailand.