CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction to the study. It provides numerous introductory details about the current thesis, which explores the role of the Ashabul Kahfi Qur'anic story in enhancing students' motivation and speaking skills. This section thus introduces the background, research questions, purposes, and contributions.

B. Research Background

One of the most important skills to acquire in learning a foreign language is speaking (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021). Speaking English as a foreign language is a considerable undertaking compared to other skills, such as writing, listening, and reading. The use of English as a foreign language (EFL) in oral communication is, without a doubt, one of the most prevalent yet extremely complicated activities and should be considered a necessary aspect when teaching the English language. More importantly, there is an undeniable demand for English oral proficiency in today's quickly changing world. English is spoken all across the world and thus has gained the position of a global language.

Speaking is a productive skill that is the objective for students to communicate effectively, since speaking skills are considered the most visible indicators of one's language competence because they enable individuals to express ideas, convey information, and engage in meaningful interaction (Harmer, 2020). In line with this statement, in the context of teaching English as a foreign language, developing speaking skills is an essential component of English language education. It is not only about writing grammatically accurate words, but it is also about effectively communicating ideas, expressing oneself fluently, and participating in meaningful conversations (Hongwilai & Kawboonsai, 2022).

Furthermore, Indonesian students learning English as a foreign language, especially those at Islamic junior high schools, face significant challenges in

developing their speaking skills. These challenges include fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, limited exposure to authentic English, and teaching methods that focus more on grammar than fluency (Aashiq & Zahid, 2024; Suhartono & Lestari, 2022). These factors create a cycle of low motivation, infrequent speaking practice, and ongoing underdevelopment of communicative abilities. According to Huong (2023), speaking is crucial for all students and should be prioritized to enhance students' motivation to learn. Motivations, as the psychological forces behind language learning, affect how much students engage, effort, and persist in learning the target language (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Without strong motivation, even a well-designed curriculum might not produce effective language learners. Therefore, understanding and improving student motivation are essential in efforts to boost speaking skills in second or foreign language contexts (Baxtiyarovich, 2024).

In line with the learners' English learning motivation being recognized as an imperative variable to consider in developing a suitable classroom environment that will help learners achieve their speaking goals. Addressing this issue demands innovative teaching and learning strategies that are both engaging and culturally relevant, assisting students in overcoming their concerns and developing a personal connection to the language they are learning. moreover, integrating content from learners' native cultures and outer-circle contexts helps increase intercultural understanding while also making English learning more relevant to students' real experiences.

Previous studies have highlighted the positive impact of storytelling and video-based learning in developing students' speaking skills. Based on Agustiawati and Berliani (2023), there was a significant improvement in the use of completion in speaking skills. Haryanto (2024) found that visual-supported storytelling improved speaking skills, while Asghar, Khan, & Farooq reported that short videos from TED Talks enhanced students' speaking confidence and reduced anxiety through engaging and enjoyable learning environments (Asghar et al., 2023).

Additionally, the shortage of spiritually relevant materials in English classrooms has been a concern. Many textbooks emphasize the target culture more

than integrating students' local and Islamic values (Nurhayati, 2024; Liansari, Rahmawati, & Sugiharto, 2021; Sumardi & Muamaroh, 2020). Thus, teachers in Islamic schools must manage the simultaneous goals of increasing linguistic competency and promoting religious beliefs. In this study, the researcher aims to integrate Islamic values into the Islamic junior high school, which includes not only Islamic identity in their teaching and institutional settings, but also operates within the national education system, emphasizing religious values, character development, and an Islamic learning atmosphere. Based on Farah & Sumarsono (2025), one of the most significant challenges faced by English teachers in Islamic schools is a lack of acceptable and standardized English materials that reflect Islamic discourse. The majority of English textbooks used in schools were written for public audiences and do not reflect the Islamic educational goals of these institutions.

Islamic educational settings frequently integrate Islamic values into the ELT curriculum, including Islamic stories, teachings, and ethical concepts in language learning materials and activities (Saud, 2024). The benefit of this integration not only helps individuals strengthen their language abilities but also helps them stay connected to their cultural and religious beliefs. In contrast, the obstacles persist, including combining religious content with secular educational goals and adapting materials for different situations. Addressing these problems is crucial for successful implementation in a globalized educational environment. This study provides a practical framework for building ELT materials with Islamic stories and outlines the prototyping steps. One innovative approach is to include Islamic stories, particularly Qur'anic stories, in English language learning. This is in line with the implementation of character education to instill cultural and religious values in students' daily lives during the school environment and outside of school, one of which is with moral and religious education in English learning, the story of Ashabul Kahfi is one of the stories recommended by Irwansyah, & Yuniarti (2021) as a learning material that can increase students' motivation to learn. The story of Ashabul Kahfi, as described in Surah Al-Kahf (Qur'an 18: 9-26), contains moral lessons such as faith, resilience, patience, and trust in God. These values resonate

with the cultural and religious identity of Muslim students and provide emotionally engaging learning contexts (Aziz & Abdullah, 2020; Hidayat & Nurhayati, 2023).

This study proposes the use of the Ashabul Kahfi (AK) Qur'anic story as a pedagogical tool in teaching speaking. This story is not only rich in narrative elements and Islamic values, but it also provides opportunities for retelling, role-playing, and discussion that can stimulate meaningful and confident student speech. The alignment between the story and students' identity may also reduce speaking anxiety and improve students' motivation (Azqiya, 2025; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2021). Therefore, this research aims to explore the potential of integrating the Ashabul Kahfi story in enhancing students' motivation and speaking skills in the context of English language teaching in an Islamic school.

Based on previous research, the present study has a rationale for using Islamic stories, such as the AK, in EFL teaching, arising from the assumption that such narratives can be effective teaching tools. This technique is investigated as a creative way to make language learning more meaningful and engaging by drawing on students' cultural and spiritual backgrounds. This integrated strategy aims to support character development in addition to language proficiency, aligning with the holistic educational goals commonly pursued in religious institutions. This goes beyond simply making learning enjoyable to making it personally relevant and profoundly meaningful. This study has broader implications for curriculum conception worldwide, arguing for the integration of indigenous knowledge systems and culturally unique content to generate deeper engagement and more successful learning results, particularly in diverse educational environments. To sum up, a specific religious story that is deeply meaningful culturally and ethically can lead to significant improvements in both speaking skills and motivation. This highlights not just enjoyment but also personal relevance and meaningful learning.

In response, the current study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the role of the AK Qur'anic story in enhancing motivation and speaking skills among seventh-grade students at MTs Cijangkar, Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia. For the quantitative research design, the study adopts a pre-test and post-test control group approach, with the experimental group exposed to storytelling

and the control group receiving standard text-based teaching and motivation questionnaires. On the other hand, for the qualitative research design, the study aims to explore the significance of integrating the AK Qur'anic story into English-speaking classes in terms of students' motivation and speaking skills development. The study uses students' interviews, classroom observations, and reflective journals. The data gathering methods include speaking proficiency tests, motivation questionnaires, student interviews, and classroom observations, to provide a comprehensive assessment of the intervention's influence on language learning and student motivation.

C. Research Questions

This thesis is undertaken to investigate the role of the Ashabul Kahfi Qur'anic story in enhancing students' motivation and speaking skills. Accordingly, this study formulates three interrelated research questions: The Qur'anic story in English Language Teaching (ELT), students' motivation, and speaking skills. These three research questions are presented as follows:

1. How does the Qur'anic story of Ashabul Kahfi influence the speaking skills of seventh-grade students at MTs Cijangkar Tasikmalaya?

2. How does the Quranic story of Ashabul Kahfi enhance students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language in MTs Cijangkar Tasikmalaya?

3. What are the significances of integrating the Ashabul Kahfi Qur'anic story into English-speaking classes in terms of students' motivation and speaking skills development?

D. Purposes of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the integration of Islamic narratives, specifically the story of Ashabul Kahfi, can be utilized as an educational tool to promote spiritual and language development in junior high school students. In particular, this research intended to:

1. Examine the impact of the Ashabul Kahfi Qur'anic story on students' speaking skills in MTs Cijangkar Tasikmalaya's seventh-grade.

2. Examine how the Ashabul Kahfi Qur'anic story enhances the students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language in MTs Cijangkar Tasikmalaya.

3. Explore how the integration of the Ashabul Kahfi Qur'anic story in English classes contributes to students' motivation and speaking skills.

E. Contributions of the Study

This study aims to make significant theoretical and practical contributions to education, language acquisition, and cultural pedagogy. This study bridges storytelling and language learning by exploring Islamic stories, particularly Ashabul Kahfi, as a pedagogical tool, aligning with Farxodovna's study, which emphasized cultural relevance in language learning (Farxodovna, 2024). Drawing on sociocultural theory, this study demonstrates how familiar stories can serve as motivating and linguistic tools for learners. By framing students and focusing on their perspectives, the study aims to create more effective models of teaching that cater to the needs of students and foster a more student-centered approach to language learning.

The study provides practical recommendations for educators and curriculum designers to use Qur'anic stories in language learning materials, highlighting their dual impact on motivation and learning, thereby enhancing culturally relevant lesson planning. Teacher-training courses can benefit from this study by incorporating strategies for using Qur'anic stories to promote moral and linguistic development. Additionally, the focus on student voices empowers them in decision-making and emphasizes the importance of cultural representation in educational materials, encouraging students to integrate their learning experiences with their identities and values.

The study can influence educational policies in Islamic schools, encouraging the adoption of culturally based pedagogy that incorporates local wisdom, thereby enriching both language and cultural learning. By focusing on the use of the Qur'anic story, this research not only contributes to the theoretical understanding of language learning but also provides practical implications for educators and

policymakers, promoting a more culturally responsive and student-centered approach to education.