CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, research problem, objectives, significance, hypotheses, scope and limitation, and definitions of key terms. The study investigates the impact of AI-Based Digital Storytelling on EFL learners' speaking proficiency. With the increasing integration of digital tools in language education, the role of AI in enhancing students' communicative skills has gained attention. This chapter outlines the rationale behind the study and its contribution to the field of English language teaching.

A. Background of study

Speaking proficiency is a fundamental skill for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, as it plays a vital role in effective communication in academic, professional, and social contexts. The ability to speak enables learners to express their ideas confidently, participate in discussions, and engage in meaningful conversations (Astuti & Chakim, 2023). Additionally, speaking proficiency is often used as a key indicator of overall language competence, making it an essential skill to develop in EFL education

Despite its significance, many EFL learners struggle to develop their speaking skills due to various challenges. These challenges include a lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, difficulty in pronunciation, and anxiety about making mistakes (Maya & Halim, 2021). Traditional teaching methods often emphasize grammar and writing skills while neglecting communicative competence, leading to a gap in learners' ability to use the language in real-life situations. Furthermore, limited opportunities for practice and interaction with native or proficient speakers hinder students from improving their speaking skills effectively (Zarei & Navidinia, 2024).

In many schools, especially those in pesantren areas, the problem is further compounded by limited access to technology and digital resources. Many EFL classrooms still rely on conventional teaching methods due to the unavailability of

technological tools that could support language learning. The absence of interactive and engaging materials, such as AI-Based Digital Storytelling platforms, restricts students' exposure to authentic speaking practices (Astuti & Chakim, 2023). As a result, learners often face difficulties in enhancing their communicative abilities in English.

One of the innovative approaches that have been introduced to address these challenges is AI-Based Digital Storytelling. This method integrates artificial intelligence with AI-Based Digital Storytelling to provide an interactive, engaging, and personalized learning experience for students. AI-powered AI-Based Digital Storytelling allows learners to create and narrate their own stories using multimedia elements such as videos, images, and text-to-speech features, which enhance their speaking fluency and confidence (Zarei & Navidinia, 2024). Additionally, AI-Based Digital Storytelling supported by AI fosters creativity and provides learners with opportunities for authentic language use in a dynamic learning environment.

Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of AI-Based Digital Storytelling in improving students' language skills. Research by Nair and Yunus (2021) found that AI-Based Digital Storytelling significantly enhances students' speaking skills by providing an engaging platform for storytelling and narration. Similarly, a study conducted by Maya and Halim (2021) revealed that learners who engaged in AI-Based Digital Storytelling activities demonstrated improved vocabulary usage and fluency. Moreover, Astuti and Chakim (2023) found that students who participated in AI-assisted AI-Based Digital Storytelling showed higher motivation and confidence in speaking activities. These findings highlight the potential of AI-based AI-Based Digital Storytelling as a powerful instructional tool for enhancing EFL learners' speaking proficiency.

Building upon these previous studies, this research explores the impact of AI-Based Digital Storytelling on EFL learners' speaking skills. It compares the use of AI-assisted AI-Based Digital Storytelling with picture-based storytelling to examine which approach yields better learning outcomes. By employing AI-driven AI-Based Digital Storytelling as a learning tool, this study aims to present an

alternative media that fosters an engaging and effective way to master speaking skills.

B. Research Problem

EFL learners often face significant obstacles in developing their speaking skills due to limited opportunities for authentic practice, lack of motivation, and over-reliance on teacher-centered approaches. This study seeks to address the following research problem:

Is there a significant difference in speaking proficiency between students taught using AI-Based Digital Storytelling and those taught using picture-based storytelling?

C The Aim of Study

The objective of this study is to investigate the effect of AI-Based Digital Storytelling on the speaking proficiency of EFL learners and determine whether it significantly enhances their speaking skills compared to picture-based storytelling methods. This study also explores the potential of AI-assisted storytelling to enhance EFL learners' speaking proficiency by comparing the use of AI-generated multimedia storytelling in the experimental group with the use of static images and traditional narration in the control group. This comparison aims to highlight the unique benefits that AI-Based Digital Storytelling offers over more conventional storytelling methods.

D. Significance of Research

This study is expected to contribute to the field of EFL teaching and learning by providing insights into the effectiveness of AI-Based Digital Storytelling as an instructional strategy to enhance speaking proficiency. The results suggest useful ideas for English teachers who teach EFL (English as a Foreign Language). Teachers can use AI-powered storytelling tools in their lessons. This can help students learn better by making them more interested, encouraging their creativity, and improving their ability to communicate in English.

E. Research Hypothesis

The hypotheses of this study assume that AI-Based Digital Storytelling as an innovative instructional approach will have a positive impact on EFL learners' speaking proficiency. The hypotheses are formulated as follows:

> H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant difference in speaking proficiency between students taught using AI-Based Digital Storytelling and those taught using picture-based storytelling?
>
> Ha (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant difference in speaking proficiency between students taught using AI-Based Digital Storytelling and those taught using picture-based storytelling

By testing these hypotheses, the study aims to provide empirical evidence to support or refute the effectiveness of AI-Based Digital Storytelling in enhancing speaking skills. The formulation of these hypotheses reflects the growing interest in integrating artificial intelligence and multimedia into language education to create more engaging and effective learning experiences for students.

F. Scope and Limitation of Study

The scope of this study is confined to a quasi-experimental design involving two groups of EFL learners: an experimental group engaging in AI-Based Digital Storytelling activities and a control group taught through picture-based storytelling techniques. The study is limited to a sample of approximately 80 students of SMK Al-Mahrusiyah at the 10th grade, consisting of X TJKT A as the experimental class and X TJKT B as the control class, with each class containing nearly 40 students. Specifically, X TJKT A was designated as the experimental class, receiving treatment through AI-Based Digital Storytelling, while X TJKT B served as the control class, taught using traditional picture-based storytelling. The selection of these classes was based on the researcher’s prior teaching experience during a teaching internship (PPL) at the same school. During the internship, the researcher observed several speaking-related problems, including students’ lack of confidence,

limited vocabulary use, and low motivation to speak in English. These issues were especially apparent during storytelling activities, which were conducted using conventional methods. These firsthand observations served as the basis for selecting the site and classes for the current study, aiming to provide a practical solution through the implementation of AI-Based Digital Storytelling. Data collection focuses on pre-test and post-test scores obtained through speaking assessments, with the treatment spanning approximately six weeks. These limitations may affect the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts or age groups.

G. Definition of Key Terms

1. AI-Based Digital Storytelling

   AI-Based Digital Storytelling refers to the integration of artificial intelligence tools and multimedia elements, such as videos, images, text-to-speech, and interactive digital platforms, to create and narrate stories for educational purposes. This approach allows learners to interact with content in more meaningful ways and provides a supportive environment for practicing language skills. By engaging learners through multimodal input, AI-Based Digital Storytelling is expected to enhance both language acquisition and speaking proficiency

2. Speaking proficiency

   Speaking proficiency can be defined as the ability of EFL learners to communicate effectively in spoken English. It is usually assessed through specific criteria, including fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and grammatical accuracy. Together, these elements reflect a learner's overall ability in verbal expression and provide a comprehensive measurement of their communicative competence in oral interaction

3. Picture-based

   Picture-based storytelling media, on the other hand, is an instructional approach that relies on static images as visual aids to support narration, without the integration of artificial intelligence or

dynamic digital tools. This traditional method helps learners by providing visual context for storytelling, yet it does not offer the same level of interactivity, feedback, or engagement as AI-Based Digital Storytelling. While useful in guiding narration, its limitations make it less effective in addressing students' speaking challenges compared to AI-supported approaches.