CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the following chapter, this study will address the background of this research, the main research questions, and the objectives to be achieved. It will explore the importance of this research concerning the increasing need for EFL teachers to adapt to technological advances and incorporate digital tools into their teaching practices. In addition, key terminology related to digital literacy in the context of language education will be clarified, and the article's structure will be outlined to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research focus and methodology.

1.1 Background of The Study

Information and communication technologies are developing rapidly, affecting all parts of life. However, this increased available information also contributes to information pollution (McDougall et al., 2019). With so much information available, evaluating accuracy and finding relevant facts requires strong skills (Shenton, 2009). This is especially important when misinformation spreads unintentionally. For example, a social media user may share a news article that contains misinformation, believing it to be true without verifying it. As a result, digital literacy has emerged as an essential skill for teachers in the 21st-century learning environment. Novice teachers face unique challenges in developing their digital literacy, often struggling with basic digital skills and lacking proper training (Cornelia & Mayuni, 2024; Purmayanti, 2022). They are also often unprepared to use technology in the classroom due to a lack of professional development focused on digital literacy (Hakim, 2021; Iballa, 2021). This is especially challenging as many novice teachers enter their careers during periods of crisis, which impacts their confidence (Redman, 2015). As a result, gaps in their digital skills hinder their ability to integrate technology effectively into teaching. This study aims to assess the digital literacy levels of EFL novice teachers to identify areas where they need support, ultimately improving professional development programs.

Literacy and digital literacy are interconnected, as digital literacy builds on traditional literacy skills. Literacy, defined as the ability to read and write (Larson & Marsh, 2005), becomes the foundation for digital literacy, which extends these skills to "the ability to understand and use information in different formats from various sources through computers (Gilster, 1997, p.1). Many definitions of digital literacy are based on this idea. Similarly, Son et al. (2011, p. 27) define digital literacy as the ability to use computers efficiently for creation, communication, and collaboration. In the teaching process, teachers combine these two skills to access, evaluate and create learning materials. For example, a teacher can analyze online resources to prepare lesson plans, write clear instructions for students in a virtual classroom, and collaborate with colleagues on digital platforms. This shows how literacy and digital literacy work together to improve educational practices in the digital age.

Digital literacy has emerged as an essential skill for teachers in the 21st-century learning environment. Keengwe (2018) stated that to stay competitive in the 21st-century workplace, teachers must be equipped with essential skills like digital literacy, critical thinking, and adaptability. The Indonesian government mandates technology integration in education, as outlined in the Decree of the Minister of Education Number 22, 2016, requiring systematic and practical use of ICT (Permendikbud RI 2016 No.22). Global initiatives, like the UNESCO ICT Competency Framework for Teachers and NETS-T (National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers), emphasize the importance of digital literacy in effective education. (UNESCO, 2018b). Teachers, especially English teachers, are expected to develop digital skills to incorporate technological teaching innovations, such as websites and social applications (Nguyen & Tri, 2017).

However, in rural areas, teachers often lack digital literacy due to limited awareness, knowledge, and access to digital tools (Quaicoe et al., 2020). Key barriers include the unavailability of digital resources and financial and minimal government support for educational digitalization (Soekamto et al., 2022). Additionally, many rural teachers resist adopting digital applications, further hindering technological integration in schools (Hassan & Mirza, 2021). These

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challenges exacerbate the digital divide, making it difficult for rural teachers to meet the demands of modern education. This highlights the urgent need to improve teachers' digital literacy to support effective teaching and learning.

Technology has reshaped teaching and learning, making traditional methods less engaging (Hakim, 2020). Before COVID-19, educational technologies were optional, but the pandemic made them essential, pushing teachers to master digital tools (Rafi et al., 2019). Platforms like Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom enabled interactive learning, content sharing, and assessments (Petrie, 2020; Pokhrel et al., 2021). These tools have enhanced participation and improved the online learning experience (Bonner & Reinders, 2018). Thus, the impact of technology during COVID-19 not only emphasized the need for teacher proficiency in digital tools but fostered a more engaging learning experience for students.

The current educational framework, such as UNESCO and ICT Competency Framework for Teachers and NETS-T, requires teachers to possess adequate digital literacy. A lack of digital literacy among teachers can lead to ineffective technology use and unequal learning opportunities for students (Mardiana, 2020). Language learners and instructors might resist adopting technology due to insufficient digital proficiency (Alakrash & Razak, 2021). Dashteni (2014) reported that Iranian English teachers lacked sufficient digital literacy for TELL. Nikou, et al (2022) argues that educators must be skilled in navigating and utilizing technological tools, without these skills, teachers cannot adequately prepare students for globalization. As Keenge (2018) notes, teacher education is crucial in equipping learners with 21st-century skills for success in a digital society. However, many teachers feel unprepared to help students develop digital literacy (Sadaf, 2017).

Many studies link positive student outcomes to teachers effectively integrating technology in the classroom. For instance, Liu (2021) found that students' scores improved when technology was used effectively. Similarly, Quraishi et al. (2024) reported high confidence levels among students using digital tools for academic purposes. Sadaf et al. (2017) highlighted increased student engagement when digital literacy was integrated into curricula, and Francisco et al.

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(2024) emphasized enhanced learning outcomes, including enriched instruction and personalized learning. Brata et al. (2022) also found a strong correlation between students' interest in digital technology and higher digital literacy scores. These studies underscore the importance of teachers' ability to integrate technology effectively, making ongoing professional development critical for educators.

Given the connection between effective technology integration and student success, examining the digital literacy levels of novice teachers is essential, as their competencies directly impact their ability to utilize technological resources. These levels can vary significantly, influenced by educational background and prior technology experience. Research categorizes digital literacy from basic technical skills such as simple and routine digital operations to advanced critical thinking and problem-solving abilities (Bayrakci, 2022; Alakrash & Razak, 2021; Calvani, Fini, & Ranieri, 2009; Rahim et al., 2023). Assessing these levels can identify support needs and enhance professional development programs.

In light of the situation mentioned in the previous paragraph, this study attempts to investigate the issue of digital literacy in the context of English language teaching. The majority of previous studies have only examined teachers' levels and attitudes towards their digital literacy (Dashtestani, 2014; Nova, 2017), English learners' digital literacy (Dashtestani & Hojatpanah, 2022; Mudra, 2020), Alamsyah's (2017) lecture digital literacy, and Chaaban & Ellili's (2017) pre-service digital literacy context. While many studies have highlighted the importance of digital literacy for teachers, investigating the level of digital literacy in the context of novice EFL teachers and integrating digital literacy into their teaching practices in primary and secondary schools is equally important to fill the gap as previous studies investigated in the context of lectures, pre-service in high school and junior high school. This gap is critical as understanding how novice teachers apply digital literacy skills in real classroom environments can provide valuable insights into their needs for professional development. Understanding the level of digital literacy among EFL novice teachers is essential for identifying their strengths and gaps in utilizing technology for teaching. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring the digital literacy levels of novice EFL teachers and

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how they incorporate these skills into their teaching practices, along with barriers and strategies to overcome this under-researched area in the field.

1.2. Research Question

Based on the concerns shown in the research background above, this study investigates the issues in the questions below

1. What is the current EFL novice teachers' digital literacy level in integrating technology into teaching practice?

2. How do EFL novice teachers integrate their digital literacy into their teaching practice?

3. What challenges do they face, and what strategies do they use to integrate their digital literacy skills into teaching?

1.3. Objectives of The Study

Following up on the research questions above, this study aims to explore the current level of digital literacy of English foreign language teachers in a primary and secondary school context. Another purpose of the study is to examine how English teachers integrate digital literacy into their classrooms or teaching practices regarding access, analyze and evaluate, create, reflect and act. Furthermore, the researcher also tries to identify and deeply study the challenging experiences of English teachers and how they overcome their technology integration.

1.4. Significance of The Study

Examining how English teachers engage with and encounter digital literacy in the context of their teaching practice is significant because it is increasingly becoming an essential element of teachers' pedagogy (Colton, 2020). This examination is crucial for several reasons in the context of Indonesia, such as the enhancement of teaching practice, professional development opportunities, and the impact on student's learning outcomes (Su, 2003; Arfani et al., 2023; Zuhri & Setiawan, 2024). Understanding the level of digital literacy among novice EFL teachers and their proficiency is crucial to identifying specific areas of weakness and strength. Many novice teachers may have varying levels of digital literacy, from basic to more advanced, and recognizing these levels helps determine which teachers need further training or support. This study can reveal whether novice teachers have the necessary digital skills to integrate technology into their teaching

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practice effectively or whether gaps must be addressed. This understanding offers the foundation for tailoring professional development programs that address their needs.

Moreover, investigating how teachers integrate digital literacy into their teaching practices offers valuable insights into practical strategies and innovations that teachers could share. Addressing the challenge can inform the stakeholders about specific areas that need support, such as facilities, resources, workshops, and professional development. This information is essential for education policymakers and teacher trainers, school administrators, teacher educators, and interested parties, particularly in shaping teacher education for the 21st century. This study offers a foundation for identifying their needs by examining current digital skills and English literacy practices. It can further guide initiatives to revise the foreign language teacher education curriculum.

1.5. Scope of The Study

This study investigated EFL teachers' digital literacy level and how they integrate their digital literacy ability to use digital technologies in language teaching. The aspects look into the level of EFL teachers applying their knowledge and experience of digital technology into language teaching, where this study focused on a novice teacher at a primary and secondary school.

1.6. Organization of the Thesis

There are five chapters in this study. Initially, Chapter 1 provides background information and details the research topic and the study's significance. The explanation of theories, pertinent studies, and the study's design will be discussed in the following two chapters: the literature review and the research procedure. The results of this investigation are reported in Chapter 4 and will be expanded upon in critical discussions. Finally, chapter 5 presents the study's conclusions and implications.

1.7. Definition of Key Terms

1. Digital literacy is the ability to understand and use information from different sources and formats through computers (Gilster, 1997). Most digital literacy definitions are based on this idea. Similarly, Son et al. (2011) define it as the ability to use a computer for creation, communication, and

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collaboration. In the context of teaching, digital literacy enables educators to discover, evaluate, utilize, share, and create content through technology and the internet (Beckingham & Belshaw, 2011). In the context of this study, digital literacy refers to the skills teachers use to find, assess, use, share, and create digital content from the internet that is relevant to the teaching process, involving both software and hardware.

2. Digital media, often known as multimedia, refers to electrical devices that store and transfer information in digital form, including texts, photos, sounds, videos, animations, and combinations of these elements (Mantiri, 2014). In this study, digital media refers to media that can be utilized by teachers for information and presentation, understandably presenting learning content and providing clear examples in the teaching and learning process, such as the use of word processing, websites, YouTube, Audio, and Video, ESL worksheets, multimedia presentations, digital storytelling, digital tools projectors, laptop, speaker, etc.

3. A novice teacher is a teacher who is assigned for the first time to carry out the learning/guidance and counseling process in an education unit organized by the Government, local government, or community (Permendiknas No 27 tahun 2020). In this study, the term "novice teacher" is specifically used to refer to the teachers who have already completed their graduation and have been teaching within an educational institution for 0-5 years.

4. English foreign language teaching involves teaching the English language to learners whose first language is not English. It focuses on helping students from various linguistic backgrounds develop their English skills for communication, academic, or professional purposes (Heydi, 2008, p.12). In this study, the EFL context specifically refers to the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language within primary and secondary education settings. This includes young learners in elementary schools and students in middle, where English is taught as a second or additional language.

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