**CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a general introduction to the study. It includes the background of the study, the research questions, the objectives of the study, the research method, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, and the definition of terms.

* 1. **Background of the Study**

Digital literacy has become one of the most crucial skills for educators since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2019 (Jaenudin et al., 2021). The pandemic has impacted the global education system significantly, and the best response to this is the development of learning from home (UNESCO Office & Children’s United Nations Fund, 2021), which is supported by technology and internet media. In line with this, the Indonesian government has also tried to adjust its policies to support the ongoing learning process by prioritizing the safety of all parties from the spread of this virus. The policies are adjusted to the location, where the educational institutions are given the authority to regulate learning models that can appropriate to the needs during the pandemic while still prioritizing health protocols considering that not all regions and communities in Indonesia are ready for online learning (Nurkamiden, 2021). However, this condition urges all elements and levels of education to carry out various innovations and adaptations to the use of available technology to support the learning process (Ahmed et al., 2020). Related to this, many EFL studies have been dealing with digital literation in terms of students’ current knowledge and skills, implementing digital literacy, and digital literacy practice in pre-service teachers; for example, some studies from Eryansyah et al. (2019), Pratolo & Solikhati, (2020), and Akayoğlu et al., (2020). However, more studies are still needed in Indonesia especially focusing on digital literacy skills in EFL junior high school teachers related to the demands to support learning development during the pandemic, as most research commonly focused on how digital literacy is implemented and is more focused on students' digital literacy skills. Therefore, this research was conducted and expected to fill the gap in digital literacy research in terms of investigating EFL teachers’ digital literacy skills in junior high school. In this way, teachers could know and be more aware of digital literacy skills, moreover, are motivated to further improve these skills.

An unexpected massive change in class that suddenly shifted to online education becomes challenging for teachers(Putri et al., 2020). Without any exception, EFL teachers also have to experience this situation where learning activities shift to online learning that certainly requires different skills from conventional teaching (Hampel & Stickler, 2005). Technological facilities needed by teachers are not only technical training but also skills to select information from various digital formats because even though teachers are currently familiar with technology when the technology itself continues to develop and become more complex. At the same time, skills in operating technology in education are very necessary (Bhatt, 2017). Moreover, it is not only about the acquisition of technical skills but also a change in learning practice, demanding the teacher to be more aware of the methods and the implementations through digital technologies to successfully do the learning activities in the most effective way (Srivastava & Dey, 2018). As cited in Lathipatud Durriyah & Zuhdi (2018), however, International Literacy Association (ILA)(2018) already reported that digital literacy that becomes the tops list of the most prescient topic to be addressed in literacy education should be given more attention and efforts, that clearly demands teacher to obtain more skills, especially in the digital technology field.

Related to the digital literacy of EFL teachers in junior high school, numerous results of research conducted before and during the COVID-19 pandemic mentioned the positive attitude of EFL teachers, although it is still accompanied by some problems and shortcomings. Nursalina & Fitrawati (2021) found that with a score of 61.95%, most of the teachers had a positive perception of the use of online learning media and concluded that with the implementation of online learning, teachers could know more about technology, yet still faced difficulties with low knowledge in using technology. Moreover, a study conducted by Rinekso et al., (2019) reported that EFL teachers considered there was an opportunity to improve information technology (IT) skills as well as literacy through the application of online learning, which made teachers more experienced and adaptable. Overall, several other studies also mention positive responses from teachers related to the opportunity to be more familiar with the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) during online learning, and negative responses that arise usually related to the skills and circumstances of teachers who are not familiar with the use of technology in teaching and learning (Pratolo & Solikhati, 2020; Soifah et al., 2021; Sulasmi, 2022). As Son et al. (2011) already mentioned that it was very important to give teachers many opportunities to use more diverse applications to increase self-confidence in the use of computer-based activities. A study by Son et al. (2011) found, however, that teachers' self-rated competency was not equal to their real levels of computer knowledge and skills for using a number of apps.

The explanation above shows the importance of making more efforts related to digital literacy in the field of education, especially here focusing on research related to digital literacy skills for junior high school teachers. In addition to the positive attitudes and opportunities during the pandemic era, previous research had mostly focused on areas of higher education such as senior high schools, campuses, and universities that are already more capable of using technology in education, for example, research from Cote & Milliner, (2018); Jaenudin et al., (2021); Lathipatud Durriyah & Zuhdi, (2018). Moreover, several other previous studies discussed teacher perceptions, application, practice, and teacher satisfaction related to online learning and the use of technology, qualitatively and in literary studies, for example, research conducted by Akayoğlu et al. (2020); Pratolo & Solikhati, (2020); Soifah et al., (2021); Sulasmi, (2022). To improve the digital literacy of teachers, before anything else, it is important to know in advance the current ability of teachers to use technology. Since the COVID-19 pandemic that has occurred in the last few years has not completely stopped, however, there are still many possibilities for the implementation of online learning to be continued and developed in the future (Li & Yu, 2022). Therefore, the reason for doing this study is to investigate the most current digital literacy condition of EFL teachers in junior high school, especially during this pandemic era.

* 1. **The Reasons for Choosing the Topic**

Based on the background of the research above, this study chooses the topic based on the following reasons:

1. Digital literacy has become a really crucial issue in the education field. The conditions and demands of the world continue to develop rapidly and continuously.
2. Digital literacy can be a great investment to overcome the various challenges that arise in the field of education during this pandemic and beyond.
3. Indonesian English teachers need more awareness and effort in terms of improving skills, especially in soft skills related to digital technology, since it has been proven that there are still many teachers who are left behind and overwhelmed with the use of technology.
	1. **Research Questions**

Based on the argument above, regarding filling in the gap, this research makes attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How do the current digital literacy of EFL teachers in junior high school during the pandemic era?
2. How do EFL teachers develop the mastery of digital literacy during the pandemic era?
3. How do EFL teachers expect the school, governments, the private sector, and other parties to facilitate the development of digital literacy for teachers?
	1. **Research Objectives**

In relevance to finding answers to research questions in the subchapter above, this study is aimed to:

1. Identify and explore the current digital literacy of EFL teachers in junior high school during the pandemic era
2. To figure out how EFL teachers develop the mastery of digital literacy during the pandemic era
3. To figure out real actions or programs expected by EFL teachers to support, guide, or train their needs to develop digital literacy
	1. **The Scope of the Study**

This study delimited teachers’ digital literacy skills during the pandemic era. It focuses on the current situation of teachers’ digital literacy and the up-skilling effort to master digital literacy during the pandemic era. Moreover, the next step that is expected to be obtained by teachers in developing soft skills in the field of mastery of technology

* 1. **The Significance of the Study**

This research is expected to make the following contributions:

1. Theoretically, this study is expected to add to the existing literature source and provide information about teachers' needs for digital literacy during a pandemic. Therefore, it can be a supplementary reference for teachers and education practitioners.
2. Practically, it is expected to contribute and clearly understand teachers' digital literacy. It is also likely to help teachers improve their awareness of developing this skill. This study may also be helpful in providing an additional foundation for English teachers to prepare for the next step in improving digital literacy skills.
	1. **The Definition of Terms**
		* 1. The term "digital literacy" is used to describe the proficiency with digital tools in the areas of information and communication technology, information management, and collaborative, effective, and efficient task performance that is essential for teachers in today's "digital knowledge society." (Li & Yu, 2022).
			2. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) defines digital skills as those that foster digital literacy and allow individuals to effectively and safely use and understand technology, search for and manage information, create and share content, collaborate, communicate, build knowledge, and solve problems in an ethical and collaborative manner.
3. Functional Skills and Beyond, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication, the Capacity to Find and Select Information, Critical Thinking and Evaluation, Cultural and Social Understanding, and E-Safety are some of the components of digital literacy that Hague and Payton (2010) identified for educators.