

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of The Study

Over the last few years, the concept of literacy has garnered more and more interest as it is linked to life quality and human index development of a country. Literacy is not limited to the ability to write and read as it has been widely acknowledged, but, for example, literacy also considers the ability of decision-making (Hastings & Mitchell, 2020). One of the reasons why literacy is getting more important is the more citizens are literate, the wealthier a country is as the citizens understand basic economy concept, therefore, have the ability to make a decision which investments fit them best (Hastings & Mitchell, 2020). In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are several types of literacies with their own focuses e.g., digital literacy, media literacy, human literacy. Among those types of literacies, digital literacy is one of the top concerns.

Digital literacy focuses on various skills to be fully participated in the 21st century e.g., to evaluate information and secure identity confidential on the internet which is undeniably of importance as nowadays society is surrounded and provided information with easy access through internet (Santos & Serpa, 2017). By possessing digital literacy, thus, individuals understand the best use of digital world.

Digital literacy is also known as a set of basic skills for the effective operation with software tools, or tasks dealing with basic information

(Buckingham, 2015). Furthermore, it also takes process of inquiry ability or behaviour of the digital information users into account (Meyers, Erickson, & Small, 2013). The real skills of any individuals to handle ICT are deeply of concern (Prior, Mazanov, Meacheam, Heaslip, & Hanson, 2016). In addition, digital literacy requires both the understanding on how any digital tools work and the reason of using and timing to use internet and the tools. Those explanations suggest that digital literacy deals with the users, ways of using information, and its access.

Digital literacy puts its emphasis on higher education to be prioritized, taught, and practiced. The reasons are, for example, by possessing digital literacy, there is positive productivity effect in conducting and presenting research (Yazon, Ang-Manaig, Buama, & Tesoro, 2019) and positive impacts in writing originality of students (Muthmainnah, 2019). Those reasons are strengthened by the fact that higher education influences upon workforce which expected to prepare and produce digitally literate graduates to fulfil global demands (Alexander, Becker, Cummins, & Giesinger, 2017). Other reason is the trend of blending teaching method between traditional and digital in which students prefer to obtain the information through digital access. Therefore, it is essential to equip them with skill for the decision making and validating the information (Santos & Serpa, 2017).

The need of digital literacy in higher education is getting more emphasised as educators and employers claim that higher education does not take firm action in preparing digitally literate graduates (Duggan, 2013).

The causes come from both students and lecturers. Lecturers often assume their students to be in sufficient level of digital literacy because they have been highly exposed to internet day to day (Santos & Serpa, 2017). It is worsened by facts students themselves assume that they are already technology savvy as technology accounts most part in their daily lives (Faulds & Mangold, 2014). The fact is, students entering higher education comes from diverse backgrounds, countries, regions which have different access and digital technology exposure. For this reason, higher education role is crucially in need to ensure all students have the expected level of digital literacy. The effort then can be started with profiling their digital literacy to map the real digital literacy of students to prepare the best learning strategy for producing the digitally literate graduates.

Previous study taken place in South West University conducted by Shopova (2014) revealed that most students did not understand the advantage and make use of electronic library. It is because they were facing difficulties related to proper manner e.g., ethical manner and technical ones e.g., how to make decision and validate abundant information provided (Shopova, 2014). This is one of facts that strengthened the need for higher education to take serious actions towards digital literacy among its students. Just because they are surrounded by technology in their daily lives, does not mean that they are able to make the best use or operate the technology well.

In terms of gender, the study in Turkey revealed that there was significant higher score of prospective male teachers in digital literacy than women' was (Çam & Kiyici, 2017). This should be addressed and resolved

as immediate as possible to avoid further digital divide across gender of prospective teachers which then also affected digital literacy of students as students cannot choose who are going to teach them in schools (Çam & Kiyici, 2017). This is again strengthened the need for higher education to map digital literacy of students which are prospective teachers specifically in terms of gender. So that the lecturers can prepare the best learning strategy in classroom to prepare digitally literate graduates regardless of the gender.

Measures taken by higher education for this digital literacy matter to develop specific programs might be varied considering its place in a country which differs from one to another. UNESCO has released the global framework for digital literacy to be adopted by all countries across the world for the initial steps. Profiling students in terms of their engagement in information-and-technology-related activities is the recommended initial step (Jeffrey, et al., 2011). Thus, the alignment between students' digital literacy profile and the higher education requirements is well-confirmed (Sparks, Katz, & Beile, 2016). It is because teachers would be able to adjust the way of teaching, develop teaching materials by considering the students' digital literacy.

Narrowing down to Indonesian context, the internet users are growing rapidly reaching 136 million users in 2016 (Supratman & Wahyudin, 2017) from 82 million in 2014 (Eryansyah, Erlina, Fiftinova, & Nurweni, 2019). However, problem remains in terms of digital engagement

which are low awareness and knowledge of digital technology proper use (Rahmah, 2015).

The current situation is that Indonesia is entering new world of global competition in *Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN* (MEA) which one of its requirements for the graduates to compete do possess excellent skills in digital literacy (Fitri & Alemina, 2017). However, Indonesian students still perform lack of sufficient understanding on handling and managing digital world that their knowledge is limited to communication and sharing purposes (Tampubolon, 2017). This was shown by several cases such as online prostitution through online dating applications, defamation of a region, and official sites hacks (Supratman & Wahyudin, 2017). This should not be neglected, otherwise, this is going to be a serious threat for Indonesians to compete in the global demands.

There is also an alarming fact of current situation of digital literacy in Indonesia which is the domination of better digital literacy among male than women (Marini, Hanum, & Sulistiyo, 2020). This is seen from the data of internet users in 2016 which comprises of 51.43% men and 48.57% women of 132.7 million people in Indonesia of which concluded that women do not yet possess the knowledge of using digital technology (Marini, Hanum, & Sulistiyo, 2020). Marini, Hanum, and Sulistiyo (2020) also cited data from Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection in 2012 which described that most of Indonesian women has much little ability and knowledge in engaging with digital technology. This

could be the sign of digital divide among them that must be managed immediately.

Similar study of profiling students' digital literacy in Universitas Negeri Jakarta was conducted by Tita Desyara in 2019 with the object is English Education Study Programme students. It was revealed that the students have already noticed the digital literacy trends, however, based on the analysis, they showed low level of awareness and engagement in digital society. Furthermore, they have not yet reached the level of creator of digital content in digital society. However, the findings described students without distinction between male and female students' digital literacy profile while there is possibility that male students possess better digital literacy as shown by the data that men have bigger percentage for internet user and Indonesian women have less ability and knowledge for digital technology engagement.

The latest data of United Nations University by Sey and Hafkin (2019) also reported that offline people across the world are more than 3 billion of which the majority is female. Women empowerment for online is getting on rise as this would impact their social and economy conditions. This step has various forms such as providing more internet connection to complement technology and providing digital equipment to them. Nowadays, basic access of technology also includes internet connection not only the availability of digital tools (Tsetsi & Rains, 2017). This is meant to ensure that no one left behind regardless of their gender.

Based on the mentioned trends, demands and problems of digital literacy, this study focuses on profiling digital literacy of English Language

Education Study Program students in Universitas Negeri Jakarta across gender to map and obtain details of their digital literacy skills which therefore provides reasons, facts for further measures in helping them perform better in classroom to be the digitally literate graduates and eventually close the digital divide case in Indonesia.

## 1.2 Research Question

How is digital literacy profile across gender of English Language Education Study Programme students of Universitas Negeri Jakarta?

- a. How is digital literacy profile of male English Language Education Study Programme students of Universitas Negeri Jakarta?
- b. How is digital literacy profile of female English Language Education Study Programme students of Universitas Negeri Jakarta?

## 1.3 Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study are:

- a. to obtain a digital literacy profile of male English Language Education Study Programme students of Universitas Negeri Jakarta.
- b. to obtain a digital literacy profile of female English Language Education Study Programme students of Universitas Negeri Jakarta.

## 1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on description of digital literacy profile across gender of students in the English Language Education Study Programme Universitas Negeri Jakarta academically to master courses as well as in their daily basis. The description is based on UNESCO Global Framework on Digital Literacy which consists of five aspects namely information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety, problem solving and Hague and Payton's framework (2011).

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study can be used to map male and female English Language Education Study Programme students' digital literacy as consideration for further measures to prepare the best learning strategy in developing students' digital literacy to help them get better performance in classroom and then fulfil global demand. It is because English Language Education Study Programme courses require digital literacy such as doing research in evaluating journals as references, communicating with others online as the emerge of more online applications, evaluating and browsing material online, discussing issues and policies in education and developing educational content of which students are going to make use of digital devices and digital information as those offer students easier, real-time, updated, and inexpensive access. Thus, the digital literacy profile of students reflects their ability succeeding in courses.