

**How to Cite:**

Kurniawati, K., & Rahman, A. (2021). Application of historical literacy in history learning in the time of COVID-19. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 5(S3), 1299-1306.

<https://doi.org/10.21744/lingcure.v5nS3.1837>

# Application of Historical Literacy in History Learning in the Time of COVID-19

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**Abstract**--The purpose of this study was to determine how the application of historical literacy during the COVID-19 pandemic is forced to Online Learning. This research uses a qualitative method in the form of a case study in a private school in East Jakarta, with history teachers and students as key informants. The result of this study is that history teachers have difficulty with allocating time. The difficulty of the teacher increases if history learning is associated with historical literacy which requires students not only to read and understand one source but various historical sources including primary sources. History teachers feel that their students' literacy levels are still lacking even though they do not dare to generalize all of them because they have not implemented any tests. The teacher thinks that both the level of historical literacy and the students' lack of historical literacy can be measured through the practice questions given in tests. Teachers are also hesitant to say the historical literacy level of their students because online distance learning uses zoom meetings. In conclusion, learning history experienced many obstacles during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are more obstacles if history learning wants to fulfill the concept of historical literacy.

**Keywords**--COVID-19, historical literacy, history learning, online distance learning, pandemic.

## Introduction

History lessons are often associated with memorizing lessons so that many students say that they don't like history lessons because they don't like memorizing lessons. The association of history as a rote lesson has long been established and has occurred in various parts of the world, including in Indonesia (Permana, 2017; Sayono, 2015). History becomes a rote lesson because the ability

of history thinking is not developed in the classroom. Historical thinking is the ability to think back and forth in time. The ability to think backward and forward will allow students to think about time and change and make connections between the past, present, and future (Drake & Nelson, 2009; Van Straaten et al., 2016). However, history curricula are designed to study past events are not explicitly state their contemporary relevance (Van Straaten et al., 2016).

The ideal situation students can have historical thinking skills cannot occur without the conditions that are prerequisites, namely historical literacy which is adequate among students (Lorenzo, 2017). Like other subjects, history subjects have their concepts and body of knowledge that are different from other subjects. To study history, it is important to prepare “knowing what” and “knowing how”. Knowing what is related to building knowledge, while knowing how is related to building critical thinking and historical understanding (Johanson, 2015). So in studying history students should master historical sources both in the form of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are sources that are directly related to a historical event or first-hand historical evidence, namely historical actors or historical witnesses such as diaries, newspapers, transcripts of interviews from historical perpetrators or witnesses (Danchikov et al., 2021). Secondary sources are second-hand historical sources usually in the form of historical research results such as history books.

Students who study history can achieve historical thinking skills if they have extensive literacy in the field of history. Mastering the literacy of subjects, in this case, history means that students can read, write, create, interpret, and present in various media matters related to historical subjects. Researchers' observations about the practice of learning history in the field show the great dependence of teachers and students in schools on the use of textbooks. So what happened was what Levesque said was a homogenization process that resulted in history teachers using the same language in teaching history which resulted in students being unable to grasp the meaning of learning history (Levesque, 2010).

Learning history by considering aspects of historical literacy is not yet common in Indonesia. Even though so many teachers have implemented aspects of historical literacy but are not aware of it. Research conducted by Wijayasari (2020), for example, shows that teachers in teaching history have found methods that show the high historical literacy of teachers. However, teachers who have a high level of historical literacy face obstacles in their history class, namely the students' strong view that history is a rote lesson (Wagner, 2011; Franquiz & Salinas, 2011). History teachers also complained about students who often use untrusted sources from the internet as their reference in learning history.

In 2020 marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of historical literacy in history classes is a new challenge for teachers (Kanca et al., 2020). The implementation of online learning in all schools in Jakarta forces teachers and students to adapt to new habits in teaching and learning patterns. This is the reason for researchers to examine more deeply how the application of historical literacy in history learning at the high school level in the time of COVID-19 and then the obstacles faced by teachers and students in learning history in the

current online distance learning period (Watt et al., 1998; Grigorievna et al., 2021).

## **Materials and Methods**

Qualitative research can be conducted in many ways and genres (Miles et al., 2014). The qualitative research design used a case study approach (case study) with primary data and secondary data. A case study is a research method that seeks to research, describe, and find the best solution or solution to solve problems facing education. The object and target of the research are special cases or problems. That means the case study method is designed to solve problems not to find or create new theories. Similarly, Yin revealed that the case study approach wanted to reveal various questions related to “what, why, and how” the learning process was held to improve the quality of education (Yin, 1997).

This research was conducted at one private high school or SMA in East Jakarta with the subject being one of the history teachers teaching class X of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and class X of Social Sciences. All students in class X totaled 284 people and 6 students were used as subjects in this study to find out how the implementation of historical literacy in the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The stages in this research started from conducting in-depth interviews with teachers and students to get broader answers. Due to the COVID-19 situation, interviews with teachers were initially carried out online via Whatsapp communication media, then after there was a new policy for online teaching teachers from research schools they were allowed to conduct interviews and direct observations with teachers to see how the implementation of historical literacy by online learning (Kasni & Budiarta, 2021). Interviews with students were also conducted online via Whatsapp communication media. Six Students who become participants are selected by purposive sampling/based on the objectives to be discussed and snowball sampling/from one source will be directed to other sources. The students were from class X MIPA (Mathematics and Natural Sciences) and X IPS (social sciences).

Researchers have prepared interview guidelines as a reference in field implementation, but questions develop at any time during implementation. Questions related to historical literacy was made using 5 dimensions/benchmark: Knowledge, conceptual understanding, source work/historical method, historical consciousness, and historical language (Maposa & Wassermann, 2009). In addition to conducting interviews, this study also uses observation and documentation techniques to find answers to existing problem formulations. The focus of observation develops during the observation activity. In making observations, researchers do not use standardized instruments, but only in the form of observation signs (Sugiyono, 2014). In this case study, the researcher also uses a triangulation technique combining other techniques (interviews, observation, and, documentation) to check the validity of the data. For data analysis in this study, researchers used pre-field analysis by analyzing preparation before conducting research, through three lines, namely (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) withdrawal. conclusion (Milles & Huberman, 1994).

## Results

In this section, the researcher will discuss the research question, namely how the implementation of historical literacy during the COVID-19 pandemic. The history teacher said that she had often heard of literacy because the school where she taught emphasized the importance of literacy in learning. However, the teacher feels that she is not too familiar with the concept of historical literacy, which she heard once in a history course teacher training. According to the teacher, historical literacy is the ability of students to read historical events then write them down and convey them again. The teacher feels that the concept of historical literacy as understood by her is important to be applied in making historical questions, but the teacher is worried that this will make it difficult for students.

In history learning, the teacher said that usually, he would ask students to read the material in textbooks as well as outside textbooks such as on the internet which was directed to trusted sources (Voss, 1998). In class, the teacher will develop these materials by asking questions that are not in their textbooks or history worksheets. According to the teacher, historical literacy is important to develop because it can explain controversial material in high school history such as the G30S/Communism period in Indonesia in 1965. According to the teacher, the explanation of this material in textbooks is not discussed from various points of view. As a result, students who are critical and interested in history are confused. So it is important according to the teacher to use sources other than textbooks (Rinartha & Suryasa, 2017). However, the teacher saw that in general the level of literacy of students in the school where she taught was still low so that in general students were less interested in reading sourcebooks.

At the time of research conducted during a pandemic, learning was carried out online following government policies at the national and provincial levels. In schools where the research was conducted, online learning has been carried out since July 13, 2020. The school supports online learning by providing paid pro zoom meeting facilities so that it has an advantage compared to zoom meeting free. One of the advantages is that 500 participants can be followed without a time limit. However, the pro zoom meeting facility owned by the school only has 3 accounts each one for class X, XI, XII. As a result, class X which consists of 8 classes or consisting of 284 students must be combined into 1 class in each subject including history subjects. The teacher said it was very difficult to manage a class consisting of so many students. When teaching through the Zoom meeting platform, teachers are required to be present at the school in a room called the teaching studio. The teaching studio room is equipped with a computer that has been installed with the Zoom Meeting Pro application.

The time allocation for online learning is also different from face-to-face learning. Following the policies of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, the allocation of online learning time is 30 minutes per lesson hour. This time allocation is less than the time allocated for face-to-face learning which lasts 45 minutes for one lesson hour. The teacher said that reducing the allocation of study time was a problem for her. First, because the teacher teaches new students so that in the beginning, 1 week is used for new student orientation and

introductions. Second, when the lesson lasts only 30 minutes, the first 10 minutes are used to wait for students to come to the zoom meeting room and prepare them to learn. Many students find it difficult to join Zoom because they are constrained by the internet network in their respective homes. So the effective time to study is only around 20 minutes.

Teachers do not prepare special lesson plans during this online learning. The lesson plans used are the same as those used in the pre-pandemic period which lasted 45 minutes. The teacher says the lesson plan remains the same, only the duration of time is adjusted. At the time of observation, the researcher saw that the learning process was not by the lesson plan because it was constrained by time constraints. So online history learning prioritizes lecturing methods, reading textbooks, giving quizzes, and directing students to be able to take advantage of the internet.

From the student side, students think that the history teacher is good at teaching. However, online learning made him tired of listening because there were too many theories and discussing problems. Students feel happy when the teacher tells them a lot of stories. This student's opinion was also expressed by 5 other friends. One of the students said that the history teacher gave them a PowerPoint slide that made them feel bored. Furthermore, a student said that the online learning system generally complained of many students, especially for history lessons. According to him, people who are interested in learning history will be more interested if they listen to their teacher's explanation that can bring them back to the time when the events occurred. Online history learning makes students only memorize it. Students want direct learning at school. Students find it difficult to learn through zoom meetings due to technical reasons such as weak networks and difficulty to pay full attention. In the observations made by researchers, students seemed less responsive to what was asked by the history teacher in the zoom meeting classroom. When the teacher tried to give questions to students after explaining a historical event, no student answers the teacher's question. The teacher in the end repeated the explanation after a student felt unclear.

## **Discussion**

Field research shows that history teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic faced enormous challenges in carrying out their duties. Teachers and schools are still in the stage of adapting to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, online learning is considered a "panacea" during this pandemic (Dhawan, 2020). Even though online learning is the answer to learning during a pandemic, improving the quality of online learning is a challenge in itself. As seen in the schools studied, preparing for online learning in a short time was not easy. So at the time of the implementation of online learning in July 2020, the school only provided 3 zoom pro meetings for 3 different grade levels. So the teacher must teach hundreds of students in one hour of lessons including history lessons. The difficulties faced by teachers and students are very large, first, they have to face and adapt to changes in learning methods and technology related to online learning. Second, Teachers and students are constrained by technology-related problems such as downloading errors, issues with installation, login problems,

problems with audio and video. Students also become bored and less attached to the learning provided by the teacher (Dhawan, 2020).

The history teacher studied had a fairly good level of literacy, seen from their explanation which saw that the use of sources outside the textbook was very important to do. However, all the obstacles faced by teachers and students in learning history during the pandemic ultimately made history learning that fulfilled aspects of historical literacy inapplicable. The teacher ultimately focuses on how the materials to be delivered are delivered according to the curriculum. Completing the curriculum alone has become a challenge for teachers because of limited time in class while giving assignments outside the classroom is strongly discouraged by the school because it is considered to be burdensome for students during a pandemic. The teacher ultimately relied on the lecture and question-and-answer method in the class. A classroom atmosphere full of discussion cannot occur in online learning in the school studied. As a result, students feel bored and are not maximally involved in learning.

Even without a pandemic, history teachers face the still low level of student literacy in their schools. In general, teachers see that students are less interested in reading sourcebooks. The problem of students who are not interested in reading is also observed by Learned (2018), who examined history classes with students labeled "struggling readers". Learned shows how disciplinary literacy can support students as readers and learners by providing a place for them to be able to critique historical texts, compare perspectives through socio-historical periods, and see themselves in history. Disciplinary literacy, which is learned, is to encourage students to read certain books, write and think about something and encourage students to participate in discourse, establish identities, and question a certain discipline on their own (Learned, 2018). Thus, disciplinary literacy is closely related to historical literacy.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, it can be formulated in research activities that the application of online distance learning has an impact on historical learning. Teachers and students have difficulty adapting to new learning patterns and teachers have the skills to create new learning designs that suit the needs of students during the online learning period starting from planning, implementing and evaluating. This makes the workload of teachers increase and makes students' interest in learning decrease because they do not experience direct interaction with teachers in the same room as usual before the implementation of online learning.

## **Acknowledgements**

The researcher would like to thank the research funding by LPPM Universitas Negeri Jakarta.



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