

Literacy in History among Form Six Students

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Abstract--- *This study aims at investigating the literacy level in history among Form Six students in Selangor, one of the states in Malaysia. Three domains of the literacy in History are investigated in this study: knowledge, skills and values. A set of questionnaire consists of multiple-choice items related to History subject has been used as the research instrument and is developed by the researchers. The research participants selected are 347 Form Six students in Selangor. The data collected is analysed descriptively to identify the participants' level of literacy in History. The findings have indicated the level of literacy in History for all the three domains: domain of knowledge is 70.30%, domain of skills is 64.64% and domain of values is 79.23%. The overall literacy in history is 71.39%.*

Key words--- *Literacy in History, Knowledge, Skills, Values, History Curriculum, Teaching and Learning*

I. INTRODUCTION

The history education plays an important role to prepare students not only for their knowledge of history but also certain skills and values. The knowledge and understanding of historical aspects in the history of the country are emphasized in the History subject starting from Form One to Form Five. In terms of skills, the ability of the students to analyse and assess historical facts is part of the requirement which is emphasized in the history education at schools. Next, in terms of values, what is hoped through the history education is to produce citizens who have the spirit of love for the country. This indicates that the integration of knowledge, skills and values exists in the History subject and has been implemented by teachers in the process of teaching and learning of the subject. In this context, the question which has been put forward is what the literacy in History among the school leavers is after they have completed the five years of the subject.

The History subject in the Integrated Curriculum Secondary School (KBSM) has shown the integration of three domains: knowledge, skills and values. The integration has been implemented simultaneously and continuously in the process of teaching and learning of the subject. The domain of knowledge involves the students' understanding towards the development of the society and the country in terms of politics, economics and social. The content of the History subject has equipped the students with the knowledge of fact-finding, mastery of ideas and historical method which includes Local History Studies, History of Malaysia and International History.

Apart from the domain of knowledge, the development of thinking skills and historical thinking skills are also emphasized among students as well as pure values and patriotism (Ministry of Education, 2003). In terms of skills in the History subject, it has to be developed along with the aspects of knowledge and values. In the KBSM curriculum of the History subject, it has stated that the teaching and learning approach of the History subject needs

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to be focused on the development of thinking skills and historical thinking skills among students. In fact, the development of thinking skills is stated as part of the objective of the History subject which is to enable students to analyse, formulate and evaluate the country's historical facts rationally and develop thinking power and maturity based on lessons learnt from the historical experiences (Ministry of Education, 2003).

In the organization of History curriculum, it has stated clearly that historical thinking skills is the domain of skills which needs to be cultivated among students and it has been included in the structure of historical discipline together with the other two domains: knowledge and values.

In the domain of values, the emphasis of the History subject is aimed at embedding patriotism among students in order to produce citizens who are proud to be Malaysians, loyal towards the country, have the spirit of togetherness, disciplined, effortless and productive. Patriotism is the strong feelings of love towards the country. The feelings should exist in each Malaysian regardless of the races. It is hoped that the spirit of patriotism will form a united and harmonious Malaysians. Thus, based on the knowledge and the understanding of the historical aspects of the country, students are guided to analyse and evaluate historical facts rationally. As a result of the understanding and appreciation of history of the country, it is hoped that students themselves can develop the love towards the country.

Therefore, it is obvious that the domain of knowledge, skills and values are emphasized in the History subject. All the three domains need to be implemented in the process of teaching and learning so that they could be mastered by the students. This is because the mastery of the thinking skills, for example, results in the understanding of the history. According to Aini Hassan (1994), the understanding of history is the understanding of human activities in the past creatively, imaginatively and full of thoughts. Therefore, in the context of learning history, students are guided to analyse and evaluate historical facts rationally. Students are also encouraged to associate past events which are understood with current realities. The ability to understand and appreciate history can develop skills and cultivate values such as the spirit of love and being loyal towards the country. This indicates that the emphasis is not only given to the aspects of cognitive but also to the aspects of affective because both cognitive and affective are interrelated. With the thinking ability, the elements of affective can be better understood and appreciated. It is obvious that the thinking skills and the historical thinking skills are essential in the History subject. The ability of the students in mastering the thinking skills can develop their understanding of history by involving a variety of thinking actions to understand information such as separating between facts and opinions, making comparison, classifying, finding relevance and determining the authenticity. The understanding of issues and historical events enable the cultivation of the pure values and the appreciation of those values. Thus, thinking skills can contribute to the achievement of the aim of the History subject which is to instil the feeling of proud and love towards the country.

Generally, much has been discussed about the thinking skills above. Thus, what is actually needed in history education is the higher order thinking skills which requires the wide use of mind because each individual needs to interpret and analyse various facts and information in history. Based on the discussion above, it is obvious that the aspects of the mastery of the knowledge, skills and values are essential in history education.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The History subject emphasis on the understanding of knowledge, the development of thinking skills and the emphasis of pure values and patriotism. It is clear that these three domains: knowledge, skills and values, are being emphasized in the History subject. All the three domains need to be implemented in the process of teaching and learning so that students will master them. The question is, how much have the students mastered all these three domains after they have learned History for five years? Have they really mastered history as an important discipline of knowledge not only for its knowledge per-se but also the skills and values which are emphasised in the subject? What is their literacy in history after they have learned the History subject for five years which is also the compulsory subject to be learned from Form One till Form Five? Based on the discussion above, it is clear that the aspects of the mastery of knowledge, skills and values are essential in the history education. The mastery of these three domains will be investigated in this study of literacy in history.

III. RESEARCH AIMS

This study is aimed to identify the level of literacy in history among Form Six students in Selangor. As far as this study is concerned, literacy in history refers to the mastery of the knowledge, skills and values among students as the results of the History curriculum learnt from Form One to Form Five. This includes the aspects of the discipline of the History subject itself as stated in the structure of the History discipline, basic concepts, concept of time, figures, place, cause, process, effect, source, interpretation, historical thinking skills and specific values.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is conducted to answer the research questions below:

1. What is the literacy level in history on the cognitive domain among Form Six in Selangor?
2. What is the literacy level in history on the skills domain of among Form Six in Selangor?
3. What is the literacy level in history on the domain of values among Form Six in Selangor?

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Instruments

The questionnaire was used as the research instrument in this study. It is designed by the researchers themselves. They are divided into two parts: Part A is the background details of the respondents and Part B is the 35 multiple choice items. These items include the three domains: knowledge, skills and values. Each item designed has four options: A, B, C and D. The total items of the cognitive domain are 21, the skills domain are 11 and the domain of values are 3. All the items built for all the three domains include the aspects of cognitive, psychomotor and affective from various levels as suggested by Bloom (1955): knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The percentage according to each level is as follows: 40.0% (knowledge and understanding), 40.0% (application and analysis) and 20.0% (synthesis and evaluation). The pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument used. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire is tested by *Cronbach's Alpha* and the score is 0.779

Respondents

The population is the Form Six students in the whole of Selangor. The students have studied the History subject from Form One till Form Five because the subject has become the core subject in the Integrated Curriculum Secondary School (KBSM). The research samples are Form Six students from 10 administrative districts of the District Education Office (PPD) of Selangor. Each school is selected from each district. The research samples are 347 students selected randomly. The background of the respondents include gender, race, the grade obtained for the History subject in SPM, the schools' location and the streams.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire is analysed with *The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0* for Windows. The research findings are analysed descriptively on the frequency and percentages. To determine the level of literacy in history, the data is analysed according to the score obtained in percentages. These three domains involved in the analysis are knowledge, skills and values. The respondents who obtained the score of 100 or 100% show the highest level of literacy in the History subject and on the other hand, the low score shows low level of literacy in history. The distribution of the frequency and percentages is used to explain a number of variables: gender, race, the grade of the History subject in SPM, the streams and the location of schools. The data analysis program selected is able to give the solutions to obtain the percentages and mean.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The achievement of the respondents of the History test questions involved three main domains: knowledge, skills and values. The research findings of the respondents' achievements of the History subject are explained below.

History literacy for the domain of knowledge

The domain of knowledge is the main domain included in the historical test items related to the level of literacy in history. The research findings of the historical domain are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Frequency and Percentages of Students' literacy in history based on the Domain of Knowledge

N o.	Item	Correct		Wrong		Total	sd.
		%	f	%	f		
1.	Definition of history	66.9	232	33.1	115	347	0.471
2.	Criteria of history	32.6	113	67.4	234	347	0.469
3.	Maritime Government	91.6	318	8.4	29	347	0.277
4.	Rulling System	97.7	339	2.3	8	347	0.455
5.	Indian Immigrant Company	70.9	246	29.1	101	347	0.197

6.	Colonialism of the country	96.0	333	4.0	14	347	0.500
7.	Figures of Sarawak	52.2	181	47.8	166	347	0.436
8.	Independence Negotiations	74.6	259	25.4	88	347	0.477
9.	Commission of Drafted Constitutions	65.1	226	34.9	121	347	0.371
10	Head of Malaysia	83.6	290	16.4	57	347	0.330
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11	Gawai Celebration	87.6	304	12.4	43	347	0.481
.							
12	Study Method	36.0	125	64.0	222	347	0.290
.							
13	Elements of history	90.8	315	9.2	32	347	0.436
.							
14	Facts of history	74.6	259	25.4	88	347	0.436
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15	Sabah Dance	86.2	299	13.8	48	347	0.346
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16	Concept of Time	57.9	201	42.1	146	347	0.494
.							
17	Power of Colonization	58.8	204	41.2	143	347	0.493
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18	Inheritance System	53.0	184	47.0	163	347	0.500
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19	Towns equality	57.6	200	42.4	147	347	0.495
.							
20	Effects of Portuguese goals	54.5	189	45.5	158	347	0.499
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21	Reasons for Acceptance of Islam	88.2	306	11.8	41	347	0.323
.							
Overall Average Total		70.30%					

Overall, the average percentage of the level of literacy in history for the domain of knowledge among Form Six students in Selangor is 70.30%. From Table 1, for the item which defines History as “History is ...”, from the score obtained, 66.9% (232) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 33.10% (115). For the item which relates to the criteria of history which is “What are the criteria of history in the statement above?”, from the score obtained, 32.6% (113) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 67.4% (234). For the item which relates to maritime government which is “Which one relates to maritime government”, from the score obtained, 91.6% (318) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 8.4% (29). For the item which relates to the ruling system which is “What is the ruling system practiced by Malaysia?”, from the score obtained, 97.7% (339) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 2.3% (8).

For the item which relates to Indian Immigrant Company which is “Which company development relates to Indian immigrants in Tanah Melayu?”, from the score obtained, 70.9% (246) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 29.1% (101). For the item which relates to Colonialism of the country which is “The following are the colonizers who has colonized our country except...”, from the score obtained, 96.0% (333) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 4.0% (14). For the item which relates to the figure of Sarawak which is “The following are those who fought for the sovereignty of races in Sarawak except...”, from the score obtained, 52.2% (181) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 47.8% (166). For the item which relates to independence negotiation which is “Who leads the negotiation of independence negotiation”, from the score obtained, 74.6% (259) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 25.4% (88).

For the item which relates to Commission of Drafted Constitutions which is “What is the name of the commission which is responsible to draft the constitutions of Persekutuan Tanah Melayu?”, from the score obtained, 65.1% (226) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 34.9% (121). For the item which relates to the head of Malaysia which is “Who is the head of Malaysia?”, from the score obtained, 83.6% of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 16.4% (57). For the item which relates to Gawai celebration which is “Why do Iban people celebrate Gawai?”, from the score obtained, 87.6% (304) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 12.4% (43). For the item which relates to the Study Method which is “The statement below is the historical study method. Which method is it referring to?”, from the score obtained, 36.0% (125) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 64.0% (222). For the item which relates to the elements of history which is “Below are the elements of history except...”, from the score obtained, 90.8% (315) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 9.2% (32).

For the item which relates to the facts of history which is “The statement below is correct on the facts of history...”, from the score obtained, 74.6% (259) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those

who gave the wrong answer which is 25.4% (88). For the item which relates to Sabah dance which is “The following are the dances which relate to Sabah”, from the score obtained, 86.2% (229) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 13.8% (48). For the item which relates to the concept of time which is “The statement below is correct about the concept of time in history”, from the score obtained, 57.9% (201) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 42.1% (146). For the item which relates to the power of colonization which is “Which is the shortest period of colonization power in our country?”, from the score obtained, 58.8% (204) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 41.2% (143). For the item which relates to the inheritance system which is “From the statement above, which country practices inheritance power?”, from the score obtained, 53.0% (184) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 47.0% (163).

For the item which relates to town equality which is “There are similarities among all the three towns above. What are the similarities?”, from the score obtained, 57.6% (200) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 42.4% (147). For the item which relates to Effects of Portuguese goals which is “The list above are the goals of the Portuguese. What are the effects of the goals?”, from the score obtained, 54.5% (189) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 45.5% (158). For the item which relates to reasons for the acceptance of Islam which is “Why is Islam easily accepted by people during the sultanate of Melacca”, from the score obtained, 88.2% (306) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 11.8% (41).

Literacy in history for the domain of skills

The students’ literacy in History subject also involves the domain of skills. The evaluation of the students’ literacy of the skills domain of the History subject is shown in Table 2 below. Among the concepts considered in the domain of skills are the students’ skills in the chronology of history, exploration of evidence, interpretation, imagination statements and rationalization. There are 11 items developed to identify the students’ skills in the History subject.

Table 2. Distribution of Frequency and Percentages of Students’ literacy in History based on the Domain of Skills

No.	Concept	Correct		Wrong		Total	sd.
		%	f	%	f		
22.	Beginning of Western Colonization	55.9	194	44.	153	347	0.497
23.	Ports Ministers	36.0	125	64.	222	347	0.481
24.	Era Chronology	93.1	323	6.9	24	347	0.254

25.	Adat perpatih	37.2	129	62.	218	345	0.484
			8				
26.	Stating Proverbs	42.4	147	57.	200	347	0.495
			6				
27.	Prime Minister	88.5	307	11.	40	347	0.320
			5				
28.	First Resources	58.5	203	41.	144	347	0.493
			5				
29.	British Guile	75.2	261	24.	86	347	0.432
			8				
30.	Location of the Angrarian Government	66.6	231	33.	116	347	0.472
			4				
31.	Importance of history	89.6	311	10.	36	347	0.305
			4				
32.	Lessons from English-Kedah Agreement	68.9	239	31.	108	347	0.471
			1				
Overall Average Total		64.64%					

Table 2 shows the frequency and percentages of the correct and wrong answers for each item related to the skills in the History subject. Overall, the findings for the basic skills of the secondary students are average which is 64.64%. For the item which relates to the beginning of the western colonization: “Where did the western colonization start in our country?”, based on the score obtained, 55.9% (194) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 44.1% (153). For the item which relates to the minister of the ports: “If you are the Sultan of Melacca, which minister will you instruct to control the activities of trading at the ports?”, based on the score obtained, 36.0% (125) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 64.0% (222). For the item which relates to the chronology of the era: “Which of the following relates to the correct chronology of the pre-historical era in Malaysia?”, based on the score obtained, 93.1% (323) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 6.9% (24).

For the item which relates to *Adat Perpatih*: “The statements above refers to the variety of *Adat Pepatih*. What could be concluded from the statement?”, based on the score obtained, 37.2% (129) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 62.8% (218). For the item which relates to stating proverbs: “Which proverb can be related to the statement above?”, based on the score obtained, 42.4% (147) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 57.6% (200). For the item which relates to the Prime Minister: “The following are four figures who were the prime

ministers of Malaysia. Arrange the figures starting from the first till the fourth prime minister”, based on the score obtained, 88.5% of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 11.5% (40).

For the item which relates to first resource: “There are two resources in history which are first resource and second resource. Which of the following is the first?”, based on the score obtained, 58.5% (203) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 41.5% (144). For the item which relates to British guile: “The diagram above relates to the changes done by British in Tanah Melayu after the settlement of Japan. What is British guile on this?”, based on the score obtained, 75.2% (261) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 24.8% (86). For the item which relates to the location of agrarian government: “Which of the following is the location of agrarian government?”, based on the score obtained, 66.6% (231) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 33.4% (116).

For the item which relates to the importance of history: “What is the importance of history?”, based on the score obtained, 89.6% (311) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 10.4% (36). For the item which relates to the lessons learnt from the English-Kedah agreement: “Sultan Abdullah has signed the English-Kedah Agreement with Francis Light in 1786. What are the lessons learnt from the action of Sultan Abdullah?”, based on the score obtained, 68.9% (239) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 31.1% (107).

Literacy in History for the Domain of Values

In this study, the domain of values only involved three main items: values of patriotism, values of nationalism and values of empathy. The research findings on the frequency and percentages for the domain of values are illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Distribution of Frequency and Percentages of Students’ literacy in History based on the Domain of Values

No.	Concept	Correct		Wrong		Total	sd.
		%	f	%	f		
33.	Nationalism	89.3	310	10.7	37	347	0.30
34.	Lessons from the fall of Melacca	79.5	276	20.5	71	347	0.40
35.	International Trading Centre	68.9	239	31.1	108	347	0.46
Overall Average Total		79.23%					

Table 3 shows the division of the three main values in the History subject: value of nationalism, value of the cooperation in defending the country and value of proudness. The frequency and percentages of the value of nationalism which is “What do you understand about nationalism?”, based on the score obtained, 89.3% (310) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 10.7% (37). For the item which relates to the fall of Melacca which is “What are the lessons learnt from the fall of Melacca to Portuguese in 1511?”, based on the score obtained, 79.5% (276) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 20.5% (71). For the item which relates to international trading centre which is “What is your feelings on the statement above?”, based on the score obtained, 68.9% (239) of the respondents provided the correct answer compared to those who gave the wrong answer which is 31.1% (108).

Overall literacy in History

Literacy in History involves three main domains which are shown in Table 4 below. The table illustrates the students’ average percentage according to each domain: domain of knowledge is 70.30%, domain of skills is 64.64% and domain of values is 79.23%.

Table 4. Levels of literacy in History

Item	Percentage (%)
Knowledge	70.30
Skills	64.64
Values	79.23
Overall percentage	71.39

Table 4 shows the level of the literacy in History among Form Six students in Selangor. Based on the research findings, it is stated that the level of literacy in History is at the middle high with 71.39%.

VII. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the discussion above has detailed all the analysis of the findings descriptively to answer the objectives mentioned earlier. The descriptive analysis has shown the level of literacy in History among the Form Six students in Selangor is at the average level. The mastery and the understanding of the students in each domain: knowledge, skills and values, is important because it gives the overall picture of the students’ level of literacy in History. The findings show that the domain of values has the highest level of literacy (79.23%), followed by the domain of knowledge (70.30%) and the domain of skills (64.64%). Based on these findings, the level of literacy in History can still be improved.

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