Teachers' Efforts to Improve Student Literacy in Islamic Cultural History Subjects

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Abstract

Literacy is one of the most important instruments in advancing a country's education, not even in Indonesia. Based on research from developed countries show that literacy has encouraged learners to access, understand, and use things intelligently through activities, such as reading, seeing, listening, writing, and speaking. In Islamic education, literacy is a duty for any Muslim, as the first, Quran verse encourages Muslims to always be studious. This research aimed at learning about the efforts of educators, particularly teachers of the history of Islamic culture, in improving literacy among educated people. The study used a qualitative method with a case study design approach. The data source was drawn from the three informants through deep interviews chosen using impressive sampling techniques. All the informers were teachers of the history of Islamic culture. The entire interview was analyzed thematically using NVivo software 12. Research shows the four attempts made by teachers to improve learners' literacy. The attempts are i) perform cooperative or group learning, ii) perform oral tests, iii) provide school reading or madding, and iv) make a ten-minute reading movement before beginning the lesson. The four attempts of teachers in this study can be set as an example for teachers in the history of Islamic culture, and schools to improve literacy cultures among learners.

Keywords: Teachers, literacy, learners, the history of Islamic culture

Abstrak

Literasi merupakan salah satu instrument terpenting dalam memajukan pendidikan sebuah negara, tidak terkecuali Indonesia. Berdasarkan hasil riset dari berbagai negara maju menunjukkan literasi yang tinggi telah mendorong peserta didik mempunyai kemampuan mengakses, memahami, dan menggunakan sesuatu secara cerdas melalui berbagai aktivitas, seperti membaca, melihat, menyimak, menulis, dan berbicara. Dalam konstek pendidikan Islam bahkan literasi sudah menjadi kewajiban bagi setiap Muslim, karena ayat Alquran yang pertama telah mendorong umat Islam untuk selalu dan gemar membaca. Justru itu penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui upaya yang dilakukan pendidik khususnya guru Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam dalam meningkatkan budaya literasi dikalangan peserta didik. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kusus (case study design). Sumber data diambil dari tiga orang informan melalui wawancara mendalam dipilih menggunakan...
Introduction
The industrial revolution, 4.0 emphasizes the importance of students’ literacy that cannot be separated from learning in the 21st century developed by training students to think critically, to be communicative, creative, and collaborative (Muis, 2019). The rapid flow of information and technology in the 4.0 educational era has impacted the limited time that students own for reading. Even though the literacy skill in reading is important for students to follow up all the development, especially for their education (Yuriza, Adisyahputra & Sigit, 2018; Juhanda, & Maryanto, 2018; Yusnita et al., 2018). In the 4.0 educational era, students’ reading interest, especially at the elementary school level, needs to be improved (Handayani, Adisyahputra, & Indrayanti, 2018). This is the first step in improving students’ literacy to take to the next level, junior high school.

The school has a role as a vehicle for strengthening cultural values and national character (Triyanto, Fauziah, & Hadi, 2019). It can be realized if the learning activity at school can encourage the formation of students who are broad-minded and have a good perspective. One of the ways done the school is, to develop a literacy culture at the school (Wulandari, 2017). Literacy activity is of great importance to do at school as the existence of literacy activity, the students will be motivated to think critically in responding the problems and be expressive. Literacy can train the skills to put forward ideas in writing, also it can encourage students to speak and develop other language skills. Furthermore, it gives more advantages such as enriching the vocabulary, improving the insight and knowledge, impro the students’ creativity in writing and...
arranging words, improving memory by reading and improving the sensitivity to the information gotten from media social.

These days, the students face how to overcome the limitations of time and quick reading (Rahmania, Mirdyah, & Sartono, 2015). How the students do their reading activity effectively without spending much time. Because of that, it is proven that literacy skills can a vehicle for the students to know, understand and apply knowledge gotten from school. Basic literacy, including reading literacy, has to be applied since elementary school (Ristanto, Zubaidah, Amin & Rochman, 2017). It is necessary as the students can improve their ability to access the information or knowledge. Literacy would take the students to understand a message (Hernowo, 2003). The importance of literacy is also explained by KEMENDIKBUD (2016) literation culture that is embedded in students' life affect the rate of success and students' ability to understand the information analytically, critically, and reflectively.

Based on KBBI, literation means the ability to write and read. A person’s ability to in processing information and knowledge. Then, based on UNESCO, literation is a group of real skills, especially reading and writing skills, regardless of the context in which these skills are acquired and who acquires them. While, based on National Institute for Literacy, literacy is an ability to read, write, speak, count, and solve problems at a high-level skill for requiring a job, family, and social. Dewi (2019) stated literacy education is an important aspect that has to be applied at school, for cultivating interest and talents from a young age. Literacy is one of the important aspects. The education process mainly depends on the ability and literation.

Abidin et al., (2017) stated someone is called a literate individual if they can read and write. Then, this definition developed into language ability includes the reading skill, writing skill, listening skill, and speaking skill, not only interpreted as reading writing but also have meaning and basic skills' implication to the understanding process that gives an understanding to the reading for identifying important ideas then will be integrated with the basic knowledge and build the situation mode (Sutrianto, etc 2016). This means the reading activity functions as a process for a reader to understand the contents, then the understanding can be as a concept. That is why the
reading activity has to be owned by each person, moreover students, teachers, the academic community, and others that used to work with books (Saddhono et al., 2014).

Research conducted by educational organizations knowledge, and UNESCO with the result of the study published under the title “The World’s Most Literate Nations” conducted by Central Connecticut State University in March 2016, Indonesia was in 60 of 61 countries for the reading interest, 59th was Thailand and 61st was Bostwana. Meanwhile based on the infrastructure aspect to support the reading activity, Indonesia’s ranking was at the top of the Europe countries. Based on that data, the literacy culture of the students at schools is still low, so the students’ knowledge and insight are weak. Since the development of technology, Indonesia is a developed country in this field. Meanwhile, based to Abidin (2018), students’ literacy skill in Indonesia is still at a low level compared to other countries, Indonesia only has a 371 score, also Indonesia is at the third low position in reading skill. The rapid development of information and technology takes this country to a deterioration in reading skill interest. Nowadays, students prefer to spend their time watching television or playing on their phones (Ane, 2015).

Education is a conscious effort to improve human resources, which in practice education tries to develop people’s ability to develop their potential. Each person needs to be equipped with the ability to develop their skills, such as concepts, principles, responsibility, creativity, and skills (Handayani, 2018). One of the skills that must be owned by the students is literacy skill. Indonesia’s government integrate literacy in learning by Minister of Education and Culture Regulation number 23 in 2015 about the character growth in the form of creating the literacy ecosystem in formal education by Gerakan Literasi Sekolah (GLS). Gerakan Literasi Sekolah (GLS) is an effort done roundly and continuously to create a school as a learning organization where all the elements are literate for their whole life through public engagement (Antasari, 2017). One of the activities in GLS is a reading activity in both textbooks and other books for 10-15 minutes before starting the class, that done by both students
and the teacher. By Gerakan Literasi Sekolah, not only do students get a new insight but also the teacher and other school elements get a new insight.

According to Sofi (2017), in learning Islamic education, especially the subject, history of Islam, the material is more focused on the cognitive aspect, but the affective and psychomotor forms are not too focused. This needs to be deeply analyzed to find out the meaning, the students have to read first and understand how Muslims’ life and Islamic figures’ journey in ancient. Besides that, we need to look at the reality that not a few students are lazy to read, so they will not understand their lesson. According to that problem, the researcher is interested to conduct research on teachers’ efforts in improving students’ literacy, especially on the subject of the history of Islam. Based on that condition, this research seeks to offer and provide interesting activities in attempting students’ interest in reading especially in the reading literacy movement. By reading literacy movement, the students are expected to develop and stimulate their reading literacy skills, creativity, imagination also the students’ knowledge.

**Literature Review**

Education as a concept is often interpreted as a learning process that involves the educators and students to get knowledge (Kirom, 2017). Education is always defined as teachers’ activity in teaching and guiding the students toward the self-maturation process (Suyono and Hariyanto, 2014). According to the National Education System Law number 20 in 2003, education is and conscious effort and planned to realize the learning atmosphere and learning process for the students to develop their self-potential to have the religious spiritual power, self-control, personality, integrity noble character, and skills needed by themselves, social and country. In the education process, it is always related to the literacy activity. Almost all educational process relates to literacy awareness, so the literation culture in every educational institution has to be implanted in students’ minds and applied as it should be.

In the Law of the Republic of Indonesia number 20 in 2003 about the national education system Chapter 1 clause 1 verse 4, it is explained, that students are the community member who tries to develop self-potential through an educational process that is available at certain paths, levels and the types of education. In essence, students
are not only meant for formal education, but also it does not establish a certain age limit, but the most important is, students are people who try to develop their potential through a process named education, whether it is formal education or informal education (Mursalim Tech, 2019).

As a student, we have to enrich ourselves with knowledge, especially the materials that are related to the lesson at school (Prasetya and Cholily, 201). One of the ways that can be done to enrich knowledge is by reading the books and the other sources, nowadays learning sources are focused on the textbook, but also there are sources from the internet. According to the survey’s result Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA), reading skills or students’ literacy are not developing for 18 years in Indonesia. As a result of that survey, it is very unfortunate that the students in Indonesia have low literacy skills. Based to Gipayana (2004) apart from reading skill, students’ writing skill in Indonesia is also a low level, where the result of a survey from (IEA) about reading and writing skills for children, there are about 50% of elementary school students in sixth grade-built area province Primary Education Quality Improvement Project (PEQIP) cannot make up a story. One of the reasons is low students’ reading skills, because of the lack of habituation from teachers and parents (Andriani and Pratisi, 2017; Brownell et al., (2017); Hutchison et al., (2012); Gebhard & Martin, (2011); El Islami et al., (2019); Genlott & Grönlund, (2013) this situation cannot be ignored and it needs movement to improve the students’ literacy skills.

Sanata (2019) stated that improving students’ literacy needs maximum effort from the teachers. Government regulation, number 19 in 2005 about Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan (BSNP) affirms that a teacher has to own competence as a lesson agent at the basic education level, tertiary level, also early childhood education. That normative direction stated that a teacher as lesson agents show the expectation, a teacher is the first party that has the most responsibility in process of transferring the knowledge to the students (Iskandar, 2013). Moreover, Hawi (2013) stated the role of a teacher as a professional educator is complex, it is not limited to the educative interaction in the class. Study more, a teacher has to be ready to control the students
whenever and wherever (Herlina, 2020). In learning, the teachers have to engage and
guide the students to improve their reading literacy (Hanifah, 2019). It is because
teachers take a central role in the teaching and learning process, so the education
quality level at a school is based on the teachers’ ability (Hardiyana, 2014).

As the points before, it is not a secret that society has a big expectation to educate
their children (Husnan and Helwani, 2018). Society’s thoughts can be understood
because the teachers are the active resources, while the others claimed as passive
resources (Ismail, 2010). The success or failure of a school is often addressed to the
teachers (Aini, 2016; Kaputra et al., 2021). Because of that, no matter how good the
curriculum, facility, and vehicle, if the quality of the teachers, it will be hard to get a
quality education.

The importance of literacy has been researched many times before. Some of the
researches were about teachers’ efforts to improve student literacy in Islamic education
history subjects Fauziah (2015); Kasmar et al., (2018); Maula, Affulllo & Ertanti
(2020); Borthwick & Hansen, (2017); Carless & Winstone, (2020); Kelcey & Carlisle,
(2013) as some previous researches can be concluded that applying students’ literacy
improvement efforts can take a positive effect, especially that related to cultural
literacy at school. However, the previous research, it has not explored deeper the
application of the literacy movement at school and the teachers’ role in improving
students’ reading literacy. This research is important to do in giving new knowledge,
mainly related to the interesting activities that can be applied at school in improving
the literacy movement especially students’ reading literacy.

Method

This research used a qualitative method with the case study approach. Case study
research is a research method that focuses on phenomena to be studied and described
deeply (Gall et al., 2003; Baxter & Jack; 2008; Yin, 2011; Crowe et al., 2011;
Murniyetti et al., 2016; Engkizar et al., 2018; Elkhaira et al., 2020; Syafril et al., 2021).
The data were gotten from three informants by deep interview, chosen by purposive
sampling technique, according to Stainback (1988) & Damri at al., (2020) within the
interview, the researcher will find out the new findings of the informants in
interpreting the situation and the phenomena happened, where it cannot be found in observing. The informants chosen have met the criteria, such as understanding the problem well, being active in the field that is being researched, having enough time to give information to the researcher, and giving information as the fact in the field (Sugiyono, 2014).

To meet the criteria as the informant, informants are the Islamic history’s teachers that teach at that school. After interviewing done, the interview would be Tran scripted, reduced, grouped into a theme to be reported into a dialogue or Verbatim (Virginia & Victoria, 2012; Rahawarin et al., 2020; Kasmar et al., 2019; Syafril et al., 2021; Engkizar et al., 2021). After that, the data will be analyzed. Data analysis is a process of finding and arranging the data systematically, field notes, and others materials, so it will be easy to understand and can be informed to others. Data analysis in this research is done by organizing the data describing it into some units, arranging it into the patterns, choosing the important data, and concluding the data.

**Findings and Discussions**

According to the result of the interviews, the result of analyzing deeply, there are four important themes relate to how the effort of the teacher in improving students' literacy. Four themes can be seen at the picture 1.

**Picture: 1. Description of how teacher improves students' literacy**

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According to toinoture 1, the researcher can explain that after conducting the deep interview with the informants, there are four teachers' efforts in improving students' literacy, the four efforts are i) implementation of cooperative learning/grouping, ii) conducting the speaking test, iii) formation the reading corner, iv) reading action for 10 minutes before learning.

The researcher will describe the quotation of the interview with the informants based on the four themes that have been explained before. There is the interview description that the researcher will show is a short quotation from some informants. The interview quotations will be delivered in different languages editors, but the meaning is still the same.

The **first** theme is the implementation of cooperative learning or grouping. According to the informants, the first effort is done to improve students' literacy is, by implementing a cooperative learning mode or grouping. The implementation of this effort by dividing the students into some groups, then each group presented the lesson. This theme was stated by informant 2, as the interview quotation in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Interview Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>implementation lesson</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>…with the group presentation, each student will read their learning material, so they can deliver the presentation well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cooperative/group,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If it is analyzed, this effort can improve the students' literacy. Cooperative learning is one of the learning methods that is recommended to use in the learning process in the curriculum 2013. Besides, it can be used to develop the students, this learning method encourages the students to work together, find the solution or create a product with intellectual effort and social interaction (Kim *et al.*, 2008). Sumanik Magdalena (2015) added group mode investigation is a learning process that tends cooperative or group, where the students will attempt to find a piece of information (ideas, opinion, and data solutions) and etc., then at the end, the students will attempt to evaluate and synthesize the information that has been gotten together. In this learning method, the students are expected to be able to think critically and develop
emotions in working in a group. Learning method, group investigation is one of the cooperative learning methods that emphasize the independence of the students to find the theme or sub-theme of the lesson that is going to be learnt by the materials provided, for example, textbook or students can find the material by internet or library (Sai, 2017; Merga et al., 2021; Abidin, 2017; Mandinach, & Jimerson, 2016; Samson, 2010).

The implementation of the group investigation learning method can stimulate the students to be active in the learning process. It is caused in implementing the lesson, the students will learn independently in groups to investigate, find, and analyze the information from many sources about the learning materials that have been distributed to each group (Takaeb and Mone, 2018). As the existence of cooperative/group learning, the students will try to understand the lesson materials because later they will present it.

Based on some experts’ ideas, it is clear that group learning can improve the students’ literacy. The first finding of this research is supported by the research result of Saepuloh & Rodiah (2020), it can be concluded that students’ literacy that used the group investigation learning method has increased more than the conventional learning method.

The second theme, conducting the speaking test. According to the informant, the existence of speaking test in daily test, the students will learn harder. This theme stated by two informants, informants 1 and 2.

**Table: 2. Interview Quotation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Interview quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>With the existence, the students will try to memorize the material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking test</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>… event it is forced, but by the time it will be a habit and they will used to it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Speaking test is a training conducted by teachers with give the questions orally. It is used to find out the ability (Santoso & Ahmad, 2018). According to the informant, the speaking test seems we just want to celebrate it.

The implementation of the speaking test, the students are able to develop their mind, not only in learning but also the understanding, analyze, and evaluate
In the implementation of speaking test, in conducting a speaking test, the teacher often finds the problems, such as learning time will be cut.

**The third theme**, the formation of reading corner. This theme actually interested, because it has been an obligation for each school to create their reading corner or it can be called mading sekolah. With the existence of mading, the students can read any information related to education, not only learning material but also outside the learning material. This theme is stated by informants 1, 2, and 3, as the interview quotation in table 3.

**Table: 3. Interview Quotation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Interview Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formation of the reading corner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>At this school, there is a madding sekolah that consist of information related to the existence of the educational problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>…the existence of madding sekolah, it will increase the students’ interest in reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>…reading corner in the form of this mading is useful to the students to get new knowledge and increase the interest to read</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reading corner is a corner that is located in the class and it is completed by various books’ collections to increase the students’ interest in reading. While the reading area is the school environment such as the foyer completed with the books’ collection (Pradana, 2020). As Triatma (2016) said before, he explained that low the reading interest, is because the books are expensive and the limited library facilities. Schools have to provide the vehicle to increase the reading interest, by facilitating the library with a complete books collection. Besides the library, mading also is an alternative that the school provided to accept many of your ideas. Tarigan (2008) stated the factor that affects the reading interest is the time to read and the price. According to this opinion, madding can be an alternative to solve this.

Nowadays, students face the problem of how to solve the limitation of time and can read in a time but it can take much information, as much as we can (Rahmania *et al.*, 2015). The students are forced to read effectively. According to this argument, the students are on their break, and based on this or in their free time can visit the reading corner to get new knowledge.
According to the result of an analysis with the title Nadya and Siti (2019) stated that the utilization of reading corner has a positive impact in improving the students’ interest in reading, also it can be habituation to read the books increasing the interest of children to read.

**The fourth theme**, reading action for 10 minutes before the learning process starts. According to the informants, the implementation of 10 minutes of action before taking the lesson can improve students’ literacy and as a form of preparation for students before class starts. This theme is stated by informants 2 and 3.

**Table: 4. Interview Quotation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Interview quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes of reading action before starting the lesson</td>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>In my opinion, with 10 minutes of this activity, 10 minutes of reading before starting the class, it can stimulate the cognitive aspects of students to be ready for the lesson</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>…. When I am teaching, I used to teach my students to read the literacy, it ups to them what they are going to read as long as they are not bored</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10-15 minutes reading activity before starting the class, conducted at the class and the students read silently together (Ardian, 2017). This activity is done to prepare the students in a state of readiness to learn the next lesson. By this step, the students love the books. Talking about literacy culture, many things that the government wants. If the literacy culture starts applied from the elementary school, literacy will become a need, not a demand, anymore (Primayana, 2016). Besides that, reading around 15 minutes before starting the lesson will make the students that do not use to read the book will get used to it (Dewi, 2019).

Based on the research conducted by Wulanjani & Anggraeni (2019) with the title *Meningkatkan Minat Membaca Melalui Gerakan Literasi Bagi Siswa Sekolah Dasar*, reading literacy movement is a program that needs to be supported by all the school’s party. In this research, the result of this research shows that 15 minutes of reading activity with various reading interest methods and reading corners are the activity that supports *Kegiatan Literasi Membaca*. By optimizing the reading literacy movement, students and teachers can take many advantages to support the learning and teaching activity.
Conclusion

This research has been done; this research is successful to reveal how teachers’ efforts in improving the students’ literacy. There are four themes, such as implementing the cooperative learning, the speaking test, the formation of a reading corner, and 10 minutes of reading action before class starts. Literacy activity is important to do at school because the existence of the literacy activity, the students will be motivated to think critically in responding to the problem, expressive and literacy can train the skills to state the ideas in the written form, and it can encourage the students to speak and develop others language skills. Besides that, it gives more advantages, such as enriching the vocabulary, get the new insight and knowledge, improving the creativity in writing and arranging the words, improving the memory by the reading process, also it improves the sensibility to the information from the social media. At least, this research can be base and reference for the next researcher to research this problem with the different issues.

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