COVID-19, EDUCATION, AND LITERACY IN MALAYSIA

Social Contexts of Teaching and Learning

Edited by

Pandian, Kaur and Cheong

ROUTLEDGE
Focus

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Preface

The times of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) are difficult, confusing, and stressful. The focus on literacy and education is important to open new learning choices and opportunities. Literacy is a force for inclusion and resilience to reimagine how we live, learn, and perform activities, especially when we witness closures of education institutions, changing role of educators, uncertainties in learning settings, and making appropriate health decisions. The rapid rush and push for digital technologies press us all to react and respond to new literacy experiences that shape people's learning, safety, and the quality of wellbeing.

This book entitled "*COVID-19, Education and Literacy in Malaysia: Social Contexts of Teaching and Learning*" addresses some of the points of intersection where diverse communities of learners explore unprecedented disruption, learn to grow through challenges and craft new resources for advancing the interests and capabilities of learners. The book aims to take us further and deeper into reflecting the learning essentials of our pandemic times. Much of the studies presented here explore teaching and learning matters from January 2020 till December 2020 amidst the pandemic when educators, learners, and other experts grappled with problems and solutions to present rapid action for the literacy and education context. This collection brings together educators, language, and health scholars to discuss the investigations they have begun about the nature of education and literacy, technology, the growing complexity and ambiguity surrounding knowledge, and perception on health and wellness in responding to the challenges of new learning.

The first section, "*The New Normal: Online Teaching and Learning with COVID-19*" offers Chapter 1 to Chapter 4 that delve into online learning experiences of university students; the second section, "*Corona Speak: Issues in Language and Literacy*" carries Chapters 5 and 6 that

explore expressive and word features in the language domain while the final section, "*Flattening the Curve: Matters on Health Literacy*" presents Chapters 7 and 8 that deliberate on the capacity to understand basic health knowledge to make well-informed decisions.

Chapter 1 on *International students and learning experiences in higher education* by Sheena Kaur, Prasana Rosaline Fernandez, and Ali Jalalian Daghigh highlights views from international students who brave pandemic challenges to confront academic, administrative, social, financial, and emotional challenges. The voices of students on the need to use a variety of technologies to support learning, creating flexible fee structures to address financial woes, and addressing psychological disorders such as stress, depression, and insomnia help the higher education industry stakeholders to strengthen the learning experiences of international students.

Chapter 2 on *University students' online learning in Capstone Unit* by Liap-Teck Ong enables educators to reflect on better teaching and learning strategies, specifically in encouraging students to develop skills in working with business partners on online platforms. His study unveils both productive and challenging students' experiences that will facilitate the online delivery of Capstone units in the new normal.

Chapter 3 on *Online assessments for university students: A case study of a business school* by

Devika Nadarajah considers the shift from traditional assessments to online assessments, which involved changes in examination modes and question formats. She argues that the case-studies analysis approach in the final examinations were able to sustain the quality and efficacy of student learning outcome assessments.

Chapter 4 on *Video log (Vlog) for enhancing speaking skills in the ESL Classroom* by Thilaga Ravinthar and Khursiah Mohd Sauffi ascertains that the video log (Vlog) can be perceived as an alternative learning tool in teaching speaking skills. Their work establishes that students felt positive and productive as they were able to cooperate and make good decisions in topic selection, learning technical skills, peer evaluations on their practices in speaking skills, and in interacting with their instructors in a very testing time.

Chapter 5 on *Foreign language learning at the university: Students' perceptions and emotions* by Omar Colombo and Tamara Boscia focus on learners' perceptions and emotions of a distance learning course in a Malaysian university, during the COVID-19 emergency. The learners' main concerns were related to the clear feeling of frustration

caused by Internet connection and computer disruption, but this did not affect learners' foreign language learning motivation. The authors, however, assert that interpersonal interaction in the e-learning environment and online face-to-face engagement was important when giving continuous constructive feedback to students on their learning activities.

Chapter 6 on *A morphological analysis of COVID-19 novel words used in Malaysia* by Komalata Manokaran, Shyi Nian Ong, and Rodney C. Jubilado centres on the morphological analysis of newly coined words during COVID-19 and the meaning of the words. It is interesting to note that while struggling with the ongoing pandemic, the authors affirm that the words like lockdown, MySejahtera, and Selangkah used during the outbreak were mostly coined by compounding.

Chapter 7 on *Public knowledge and perception of COVID-19 and its preventive measures* by

Edmund Ui-Hang Sim and Su-Hie Ting investigated perceived knowledge of COVID-19 disease and perceived effectiveness of preventive measures among Malaysians. The analysis of survey data revealed that the public believed that they have moderate knowledge of COVID-19 disease. They note that individuals with good health literacy are more likely to take preventive measures and seek treatment if they fall sick.

Chapter 8 on *Knowledge, attitude, and practice on health and legal measures* by Natasya Abdullah, Noor Dzuhaidah Osman, Nur Syazana Umar, Muhammad Nizam Awang, and Zairina A Rahman reiterate that health communication and policies need baseline information on people's knowledge, attitudes, and practices with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors note that a majority of the study respondents expressed their willingness to adhere to the government's prevention and control measures for the well-being of their families.

Navigating through the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath demands strength as we confront disruption in literacy and education. This book takes stock of some of the difficulties encountered by diverse learning communities while adapting to online knowledge cultures to understand how we can improve our learning and wellbeing systems. In literacy as in health, we are safe when our communities are safe; we prosper when everyone in our communities prosper too.

The editors would like to acknowledge the ideas and hard work put forward by everyone involved in this book. The contributors responded readily when we asked them to review, update, and expand

their original chapters with only a few months to complete this work. We hope that you, the reader, will find this book useful, stimulating, and inspiring.

Ambigapathy Pandian
Surinderpal Kaur
Huey Fen Cheong

Part A

The new normal: Online teaching and learning with COVID-19

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Edmund Ui-Hang Sim and Su-Hie Ting

7.1 Introduction

Knowledge from research on the transmission route of SARS-CoV-2 is the backbone for recommendation by World Health Organization (WHO) on the lockdown and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for prevention. At the start of the pandemic, the transmission mode of SARS-Cov-2 was suggested to be from droplet that is discharged from a distance of up to 1.8 metres (6 ft) when an infected person following coughs and/or sneezes (CDC, 2020b; La Rosa et al., 2020). Possible transmission routes include speaking (Anfinrud et al., 2020; Stadnytskyi et al., 2020), airborne aerosols (Lewis, 2020), contaminated surfaces (van Doremalen et al., 2020), and stool (Holshue et al., 2020). Nevertheless, all coronaviruses can be destabilised by soap (Gibbens, 2020). The three most important SOPs are physical distancing, wearing of face masks when in public, and avoiding crowded and confined spaces. Azlan et al. (2020) found that Malaysians had low adherence to preventive measures and feared testing (Yau et al., 2020) although they professed good knowledge of COVID-19. The factors that influence perceived effectiveness of COVID-19 preventive measures and adoption of these measures are still not well understood.

This chapter reports the results of a study on health literacy among Malaysians on COVID-19 pandemic, in particular perceived knowledge of COVID-19 disease and effectiveness of preventive measures.

7.2 Literature review

Nomenclature or proper labelling of COVID-19 with respect to the pathogen and disease is often confusing to the layman. When the novel coronavirus was initially identified, it was given a provisional