# MASTERA AND GENERATION-Y: THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

## (*MASTERA dan Generasi-Y: Peranan Sastera di Asia Tenggara*)

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## Abstract

The Southeast Asia Literary Council, or MASTERA (Majlis Sastera Asia Tenggara), is a regional body representing five countries, namely Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. MASTERA was established in 1996 with the main aim to weave strong literary relations among its member countries. Each year, the council organizes its agendas through various activities in conjunction with its annual MASTERA council meeting. Among them are the International Southeast Asia Literary Seminar (Seminar Antarabangsa Kesusasteraan Asia Tenggara or SAKAT), MASTERA Comparative

Literature Lecture Series and MASTERA Writing Programme of various genres, including poetry, short story, essay, stage drama and novel. Although MASTERA was established more than two decades ago by the pioneers, the majority of its current active participants are young literary enthusiasts who belong to Generation-Y. This positive scenario is very constructive in all aspects and the participation of Generation-Y should be given appreciation and attention accordingly as they will be the next bearers of MASTERA. In view of this, a study has been conducted to observe the potentials of MASTERA to provide for its members from Generation-Y based on their literary needs in Southeast Asia. The study on the younger generation of MASTERA members will be reflected in this article, which describes the challenges faced by MASTERA in terms of the platform and content in relation to Industrial Revolution 4.0 (4IR). The findings will enable the study to forward suggestions in the aspects of regional philosophy, including its practice.

Keywords: MASTERA, Malay literature, Generation-Y, 4IR, Southeast Asian literature, challenges

### *Abstrak*

*MASTERA atau Majlis Sastera Asia Tenggara ialah sebuah majlis serantau yang mewakili beberapa buah negara anggota di Asia Tenggara yang terdiri daripada Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapura dan Thailand. Penubuhan MASTERA pada tahun 1996 mempunyai beberapa matlamat. namun yang penting, majlis ini bertujuan menjalin erat hubungan kesusasteraan negara anggota MASTERA dalam pelbagai bentuk kegiatan. Saban tahun beberapa agenda utama dijalankan setiap kali Sidang MASTERA diadakan. Antara kegiatan tersebut termasuklah penganjuran bersama Seminar Antarabangsa Kesusasteraan Asia Tenggara (SAKAT), Siri Kuliah Kesusasteraan Bandingan MASTERA dan Program Penulisan MASTERA dalam aneka genre seperti puisi, cerpen, esei, drama pentas dan novel. Meskipun MASTERA ditubuhkan lebih dua dekad yang lalu dan dipelopori oleh angkatan terdahulu, namun rata-rata kebanyakan khalayak yang menyemarakkan lagi kegiatan anjuran MASTERA adalah dalam kalangan generasi muda, iaitu Generasi-Y. Perkara ini adalah sesuatu yang sangat konstruktif dan harus dihargai serta diberikan perhatian sewajarnya sebagai tanda keprihatinan terhadap generasi pelapis anggota MASTERA. Maka satu tinjauan kajian dibuat untuk meneliti keupayaan MASTERA dalam memenuhi keperluan kesusasteraan terkini di Asia Tenggara demi manfaat*

*khalayak mudanya yang tergolong dalam Generasi-Y. Kajian mengenai generasi muda MASTERA ini mencetuskan penulisan makalah yang memberikan tumpuan kepada cabaran terhadap MASTERA dalam bentuk wadah dan pengisian yang sangat terkait dengan teknologi Revolusi Perindustrian 4.0 (4IR). Penemuan kajian ini mengajukan beberapa usul dari sudut falsafah serantau, tidak terkecuali praktisnya.*

*Kata kunci: MASTERA, kesusasteraan Melayu, Generasi-Y, Revolusi Perindustrian 4.0 (4IR), Sastera Asia Tenggara, cabaran*

## INTRODUCTION

The Southeast Asian region, which comprises 15 countries, has many similarities among its member countries that can benefit all their citizens. In general, the cooperation and understanding of this region bind the relationship of all the countries in terms of education, sports, arts as well as literature. An official body that gathers the literary spirit of this region is known as the Southeast Asia Literary Council or MASTERA (Majlis Sastera Asia Tenggara). MASTERA is a regional body representing five countries, namely Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. MASTERA was established in 1996 with the main aim to weave strong literary relations among its member countries. Each year, the council organizes its agendas through various activities in conjunction with its annual MASTERA council meeting. Among them are the International Southeast Asia Literary Seminar (SAKAT), MASTERA Comparative Literature Lecture Series and MASTERA Writing Programme for various genres, including poetry, short story, essay, stage drama and novel.

The activities conducted mainly involve a literature audience among the young generation, most of whom are Generation-Y. Interestingly, the map of Malay literature drawn in Southeast Asia today and its future lie in the hands of those directly involved in literature—such as scholars, activists, tertiary students and writers—be they on part-time or full-time basis. This positive scenario is very constructive in all aspects and the participation of Generation-Y youths should be given appreciation and attention accordingly as they will be the next bearers of MASTERA.

In view of the situation, a study has been conducted to observe the potentials that MASTERA is able to provide for its members from Generation-Y based on their literary needs in Southeast Asia. The study on the younger generation of MASTERA members will be reflected in this

article, which describes the challenges faced by MASTERA in terms of the platform and content in relation to Industrial Revolution 4.0 (4IR).

## MASTERA AND THE YOUNG GENERATION

With the spirit and awareness that all Asians are from similar roots of origin, an initiative began in 1973 to bridge a special relationship among the people of the region where all laureates and the like can come together.  The Malaysian government agency for Malay language and literature, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP), together with the Federation of National Writers Association Malaysia (Gabungan Persatuan Penulis Nasional Malaysia or GAPENA), began the effort to organize Seminar Kesusasteraan Nusantara (Southeast Asian Literature Seminar) in the same year. Since 1977, the seminar has been organized and hosted by Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam in rotation. Thailand and the Philippines also participate in this seminar each time it is organized. As an outcome, the language and literature bodies from each country's government and non-government authorities eventually developed the Southeast Asia Council of Literature in 1994. Malaysia, through GAPENA, was entrusted to be the Council Secretariat.

In line with close cooperation in the academic, economic and cultural elements of each country, it was considered appropriate to register a specific literature body that is strong enough to bond the regional understanding that already existed.  Through literature activities planned ahead from time to time by its member countries, togetherness in all dimensions can be enhanced. Hence, MASTERA was established to:

(1) Create relationship, understanding and cooperation of literature among member countries in the effort to ensure the enhancement and development of regional literature towards a global community of literature citizens.
(2) Coordinate regional literature-related activities and research in a compact manner.
(3) Open opportunities together for all in talent search, translation, publication and recognition of achievements of creative literature.
(4) Work together in enhancing the spread and use of the main language of the region as a means of communication, medium of knowledge and medium of creative expressions at the regional and international levels. The third aim of MASTERA shows its function as an official body

that is directly involved with the development of literature, which also proves its concern for the younger generation. The statement "to open opportunities together for all in talent search…," among others, reflects that MASTERA provides opportunities to writers, including the younger generation, to become better writers, thus providing a space for motivation of creative writing.

Several activities have been provided by MASTERA on a regular basis, a few of them being the International Southeast Asia Literary Seminar (SAKAT), MASTERA Comparative Literature Lecture Series and MASTERA Writing Programme, which involve mostly the participation of youngsters. MASTERA Comparative Literature Lecture Series is an annual activity comprising speeches delivered by selected laureates from MASTERA member countries. Lectures of MASTERA literature, previously known as Kuliah Kesusasteraan Bandingan MASTERA (Comparative Literature Lecture Series), was first organized in 1997. This lecture series is organized by MASTERA Malaysia and delivered in all MASTERA member countries.

Its first lecture series were delivered by Prof. Dr. Sapardi Djoko Damono (1997), Prof. Dr. Md. Salleh Yaapar (1998), Dr. Luisa J. Mallari-Hall (1999), Dr. Ampuan Hj. Ibrahim Ampuan Hj. Tengah (2000), Dr. Hadijah Rahmat (2001) and Dr. Ratiyya Saleh (2002), all of whom are/were prominent scholars in their respective country. Interestingly, in the current series, Noridah Kamari, a young scholar from Singapore, delivered the 22nd lecture in 2019 with the title "*Yang Terlepas, Tersisih dan Terasing: Kajian Bandingan Penulisan Sejarah Sastera di Nusantara*." Her lecture was related to her doctoral research completed in the same year from Universiti Sains Malaysia. MASTERA incorporates activities with local universities and utilizes their campus lecture rooms. For instance, for the 2019 lecture, MASTERA Comparative Literature Lecture Series took place in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. With university students as the main audience, it is a strategy to expose Southeast Asian literature through these lecture series.

## TECHNOLOGY, LITERATURE AND GENERATION-Y

Technological advancement occurs in almost every subject area. "Technology" itself mostly refers to knowledge closely related to machine; one of its aims is to benefit everyone. For instance, in the case of Malaysia, the recent Digital Native Agenda (DNA23) was launched by the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia. It is a new approach to enhance

economic matters, particularly for youths and those who need economic assistance. The framework focuses on these groups in order to transform the digital industry. Hence, digital technology is incorporated accordingly to benefit all levels of the society.

Looking at the connection of recent technology with MASTERA, the Southeast Asia Literary Seminar (SAKAT) 2019 was given the theme "*Kota, Teknologi dan Kemanusiaan*" ("Urban, Technology and Humanities"). SAKAT is one of the activities organized by MASTERA since 1999. Beginning 2010, this seminar has taken place annually in conjunction with MASTERA summit in each member country. The organization of this seminar, among others, aims to bring together literature cooperation in the region. It ultimately aims to inculcate regional literature to be a part of an empowered global literature society. SAKAT is also organized with the participation of Southeast Asian literature study centres in many parts of the world that study Malay literature in order to bring all literary works to the global centre stage.

Interestingly, SAKAT also provides opportunities to young scholars to present the results of their research or to share observations. For example, in SAKAT 2019, which was organized in Singapore in conjunction with MASTERA 25th Summit from 28th to 29th September 2019, several invited presenters were tertiary students and young researchers. Brunei Darussalam was represented by Awangku Mohd Noor Sham Pg Hidup (activist) and Dayangku Norsafiah Pengiran Sapudin (staff of DBP Brunei), while Singapore was represented by Muhammad Andi Zulkepli (educator) and Muhammad Shahril Shaik Abdullah (librarian). Most of the views from these presenters were related to literature with 4IR, cross-media creativity and the dynamism of platform transfer.

Among the ideas and messages brought along in their presentations with understanding and awareness is that the human practice of managing the world, including technology, is represented in the power of God, as stated in al-Quran, al-Saffat: 96 (Muhammad Husni, 2019). Pure technology should not contain harm and this is depicted in the three main aspects of the DNA23. They are prosperity and happiness, preparation for the future as well as ethics and culture.

Therefore, in general, through the activities organized by MASTERA, technology is seen to provide a direct influence to literature. Creative literature, such as verses, short stories and novels, also experience the impact from many avenues of creativity and innovation due to technological explosion. Through the activities under MASTERA then, it

is hoped to observe such avenues and how changes occur, either physically or in the form of spiritual inspirations. There will be discussions in this background on how changes occur in the literature of Southeast Asia. These discussions see various short cuts and road crossings by several examples of creative writings in Southeast Asian literature. For instance, when verses are musicalized into melodious songs, the technological tools used to support the genre and music transfer can be observed. Another example is the transformation of novels into films through mechanization and film animation. Such a creative platform can effectively bring out the different nuances of creative writings. Indeed, changes and cutting across medium closely involve creativity in the writing of its background and ideology, which can be a guideline to MASTERA's young generation audience.

## Technology and platform transfer

An activity by MASTERA that is an obvious evidence of opportunity to youngsters is the MASTERA Writing Programme. This is an annual event that alternates in focus of genre between poetry, short story, novel, essay and stage drama. Indonesia has been the host of this event since 1997. All member countries send their representatives to be facilitators and young generation participants attend the workshop. Selections are usually made based on their ability to produce creative writings. The week-long event includes activities such as talks, lectures and operational discussions or works produced by them. The facilitators invited are among the laureates who become their references. One such laureate was Sapardi Djoko Damono. Besides being involved with this programme, the known professor was actively involved as an invited speaker of MASTERA Comparative Literature Lecture Series.

A book written by Sapardi Djoko Damono about *Alih Wahana* (vehicle shift) (2014a), of the same title, relates to the effect of technology in literature. *Alih Wahana* is briefly the shift of one art genre to another, which includes works of translation and imitation. *Wahana* means vehicle, and works of art are considered as a "vehicle" that can move something. A vehicle is also considered as a medium to express or demonstrate ideas or feelings. It is a tool to transfer something from one place to another (Sapardi, 2014a:13).

Through the writing programme as such, MASTERA can incorporate technology in literature, specifically when facing with participants from Generation-Y. For instance, Sapardi Djoko Damono's work titled *Hujan Bulan Juni* ("The Rain in June") (2017) is a poem composed in 1989. It

was later musicalized with a melody and became a song of the same title in 1990 by Reda Gaudiamo and Ari Malibu. The song later became the theme for a comic sketch by Mansyur Daman. The three-versed poem, donned with creativity, was extended by the poet who turned it into a novel of the same title in 2015 and has since been reprinted several times. Eventually in 2017, *Hujan Bulan Juni* was reborn as a film directed by Reni Nurcahyo and Hestu Saputra.

### *Hujan Bulan Juni*

*tak ada yang lebih tabah*
*dari hujan bulan Juni*
*dirahasiakannya rintik rindunya*
*kepada pohon berbunga itu*

*tak ada yang lebih bijak*
*dari hujan bulan Juni*
*dihapusnya jejak-jejak kakinya*
*yang ragu-ragu di jalan itu*

*tak ada yang lebih arif*
*dari hujan bulan Juni*
*dibiarkannya yang tak terucapkan*
*diserap akar pohon bunga itu*

(Sapardi Djoko Damono, 2014b:104)

Such was the journey of the poem *Hujan Bulan Juni*. In the context of MASTERA and its activities, two questions are prompted: What is the reason behind a creative writing being transferred from one creative medium to another? Why was *Hujan Bulan Juni* first transformed into a prominent song by Reda Gaudiamo? This poem is basically a string of chosen words in its physical manner that ensures its total syllabus and sound is of balanced measure or is symmetrical (Mawar & Noridah, 2006:125). Through this characteristic, a poem is ready to be converted into a song and becomes easily melodious with the existing formula.

For love and loyalty to the previous text and hypotext, those who enjoy and love the conversion are able to appreciate the poem. Cultivating and growing the silent and soundless genre by lifting it into a different genre is a great honour to a poem. Vehicle shift that is done through visual medium,

such as comic and animation from a poem such as *Hujan Bulan Juni*, is also easier to be accepted among its audience. In general, the celebration widens. Many think that when a poem is incorporated with visual and audio, which is more commercial in nature, this method of vehicle shift from writing is easier to deliver and be accepted. However, in certain cases, even though technology and screen is in trend, the page of a paper is still much appreciated (Muhammad, 1999).

The young MASTERA generation of activists can see further creative works, such as the conversion of the poem *Hujan Bulan Juni* into a novel and a film, which seeps through comicalization first. There is already the content of the poem (which is ready for further creativeness), which at least opens an avenue for poem visualization that speaks on the rain and drought. According to Mulyo Hadi Purnomo and Untung Kustoro (2018), the poem *Hujan Bulan Juni* reflects on something that comes ahead of time. Much of the discussion is from the eye of climatology, where the month of June is considered as the season of drought, and mostly no rain (Dini et al., 2017:187). However, when it comes to the choice of words, a poem offers meaning that can be wide and very imaginative. It can be interpreted with various spiritual understanding through the vehicle of commercialization, as seen in the writing by Mansyur Daman:

*Dalam 12 bagian gambar, Man menginterpretasi puisi Sapardi dengan tiga tokoh: seorang perempuan berkursi roda, lelaki bertopi dan berkaca mata, serta seorang sopir. Kisahnya, dalam suasana hujan seorang perempuan berziarah ke pemakaman diantar sopir. Sementara lelaki bertopi mengamatinya dari kejauhan. Seikat bunga diletakkan pada sebuah pusara oleh perempuan di atas kursi roda. Tak lama lelaki bertopi mengambilnya. Peristiwa singkat itu terjadi di bawah guyuran hujan bulan Juni.* (Wawan H Prabowo, 2013)

[In the 12 pictures, Man interprets Sapardi's poem using three figures: a wheelchair-bound woman, a man wearing a hat and spectacles, and a chauffeur. The story occurs in a rainy weather, where a woman is travelling to a funeral, driven by a chauffeur. Meanwhile, the man in a hat watches from a distance. A bouquet of flowers is placed on a tomb by a woman in a wheelchair. Not long after, the man in the hat retrieves it. This short encounter happened in the pouring rain of June].

The younger MASTERA audience is exposed to not just technological impact, but also the process of vehicle shift. Be it a sketch or plot by Mansyur Daman (Figure 1), both gave new ideas to Sapardi Djoko Damono, who then transformed his poem to a 133-page novel of the same title. The



**Figure 1** *Hujan Bulan Juni,* a comic by Mansyur Daman (1994).

creativity of Mulyo Hadi Purnomo and Untung Kustoro (2018) very much associates the character of Sarwono in the novel with "a tree" in the poem, as well as retaining this character, Pingkan and a few others with love, which was also extended to Reni Nurcahyo and Hestu Saputra in the film *Hujan Bulan Juni*. However, certainly with Sapardi Djoko Damono and Reni Nurcahyo as well as Hestu Saputra, there would be something that needs to be "changed" in the hypertext. A switch of time frame and environment indeed provides an impact on the "new text." Vehicle shift enables this

to take place and obviously gives it a "new" impact. Demonstrated with how technology is incorporated with music, illustration and movie making, three verses of "*Hujan Bulan Juni*" is intelligently transposed to the silver screen. Sapardi Djoko Damono's creativity proves the role of technology in the various levels of vehicle shift that the poem experiences. This is a major part of view by Cahir (2006) in her book, *Literature to Film*. MASTERA, which provides a space for discussion, can benefit its young generation audience who are the right target of such creative processes.

The journey to vehicle shift, which has at least brought changes to the value between texts in the dimension of technology mentioned, has also brought out conflict in humanity. Asma Nadia, who authored the novel *Assalamu'alaikum Beijing* (2013), was not happy with the process of transfer of her novel to film by director Guntur Soeharjanto. It concerns the plot of the relationship of a man and woman out of wedlock in the film, which Asma considered as inappropriate with regard to ideology (and certainly, faith) (Dyan Wahyuning Praharwati & Sahrul Romadhon, 2017).

MASTERA, through this writing programme, opens the opportunity for discussion on the relationship between vehicle shift with "loyalty" and the conflict between text and copyright, which can be an issue due to the demands of many factors. The transfer from a writing to a visual genre demands many changes during the shift, such as fulfiling visual demands for promotional and commercialization purposes, which often involves sensational and popularity issues. However, it relies on the product of the shift. For instance, in the Malaysian literature scenario, a novel by Fauziah Ashari titled *Ombak Rindu* (published in 2002 by Alaf 21), which has 23 reprints, was adapted into film by Tarantella Pictures and Astro Shaw and directed by Osman Ali in 2011. Among the main actors involved were Aaron Aziz, Maya Karin and Lisa Surihani. The movie achieved box-office success when it collected RM10.90 million (2011).  It also won six awards at the Malaysia 25th Film Festival and six others at the Malaysia Screen Award 2012. The achievement of vehicle shift is proof, among others, of the role of film technology in transforming creative literature into film, such as this popular novel. This discussion was also debated by Hamed (2018) on the multimedia transformation of drama scripts in Singapore. A similar case is seen in the vehicle shift of music into film soundtrack, which has also contributed towards its success. Among them are *Hari-hari Terakhir Seorang Seniman* (Anwar, 1979), *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (Habiburrahman, 2004) and *Tombiruo: Penunggu Rimba* (Ramlee Awang Murshid, 1998).

As a guideline in writing creative materials, as an audience, Generation-Y MASTERA members should be able to observe several cases of novel adaptation that are considered as not fulfilling the requirements of vehicle transfer into films, such as *Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan* and *Srengenge* (Shahnon Ahmad), or *Sangeetha* (Azizi Haji Abdullah). However, in many conflicting cases, this can partly be solved by a fairer incorporation between the novelist and the film director or producer.  The sophistication of technology can also be the intermediator between texts and become the vehicle that can balance between time and space. According to A. Aziz (2000), the spread of literature, with the support of technology, should each shoulder the responsibility. Technology should be in harmony with culture (literature) in order to respect national ideology, as the latter can be effectively defended using the former two (p. 238). should respect national ideology. It will be defended through technology and in our own way (p. 238).

The Generation-Y of MASTERA have also witnessed a more direct incorporation of digital technology of Southeast Asian literature, including **cyber literature**, **e-literature**, **digital literature** and **internet literature**,



**Figure 2** e-Sastera.com

(Source: https://www.e-sastera.com)
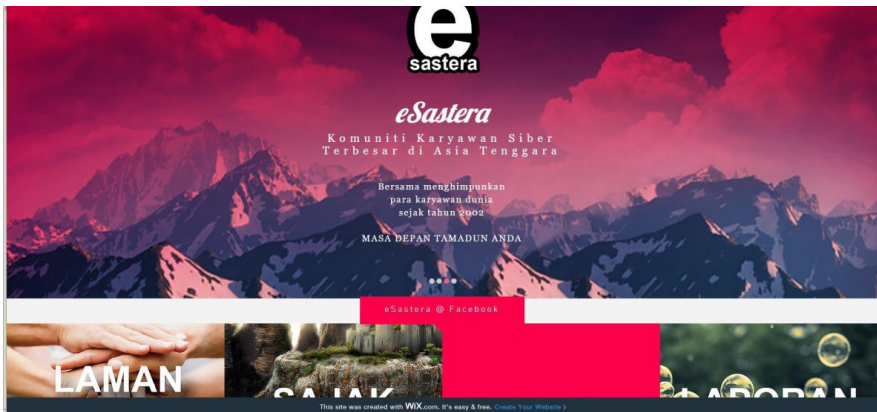
all of which are more interactive in nature. e-Sastera.com was one such digital portal space in Malaysia that was established in 2004 and initiated by an engineering professor with a personal interest in literature. Irwan Abu Bakar (full name Wan Abu Bakar Wan Abas) is a professor in mechanical engineering at the Department of Engineering, University of Malaya (Irwan, 2016).

As a cyber space, e-Sastera.com offered a place for Generation-Y to participate in creative writing. It generally included the existence of literature in cyber/digital/internet space, as well an e-magazine since 2002 called *e-Sastera.com* with various communities developed at CommunityZero.com, a commercial community until 2005, when it has its own website. Since 2015, the e-magazine has been republished in a new portal named e-Sastera2u.com. In 2016, this e-magazine was established in Facebook with E-Sastera Malaysia as its new address. It is obvious that digital technology has been in power in every corner of the literary world, both physical and digital. Some description of the characteristics of e-literature is as follows:

> For instance, when a poet expresses emotions and thoughts through e-poem and not just through text as is the usual way, it is to include many cyber elements such as colourful background and alphabets or with structures, graphics and photographs, as well as audio and animation effects. Sound effects are also incorporated in cyber poems. In fact, the translation of poems also accompanies the presentation with audio background in the language of the original poem recited by the poet. It can be said that poetic idea is not just written on paper, but is also "composed" to make an effective craft. Poetic e-craft is also enriched with Internet links and interactive elements. Today, e-poems are always presented in the form of flash and slide shows.

> Apart from poems, which incorporate various cyber elements, other genres such as short story writing also receive the impact of cyber input technology as those that impact poem creation. For instance, the short story on earthquake can be presented in an interactive way where the screen shakes and the readers can feel the experience of an earthquake. (Translated from Wan Abu Bakar, 2008:27–28)

Rosnidar and Mohd. Saleeh (2013) focuses on cyber poetry genre, or also known as "Kinetic typography poems" (p. 258–261). They found that from technical and self-perspective aspects, font type choice can create certain emotional effects on readers, particularly Generation-Y. The same was found on the role of audio pitch (high or low levels of a voice or sound tone). Meanwhile, from the perspective of ethics, the **literariness** of "new media poems" almost does not follow the conventional rules or frame of a poem. They are also full of symbols to represent words. They certainly become **ambiguous** and display subjective meanings.

However, the challenges faced by Generation-Y is on the ability of Southeast Asian Malay literature to retain "book culture" and to cultivate a critical attitude without too much concern on the platform supporting it, be it new or traditional. Edward (2001), in his writing titled "The Book, Critical Performance and the Future of Education" in the journal *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies* (Vol 10), as cited by Azhar (2013), stresses that it is not possible for the digital or cyber platform to replace the traditional book culture. The act of (literature) book reading is "long time span use of energy with a high discipline." This is to the extent where a huge question is raised: "What kind of literature is going to be developed in the excitement of the new mode?" (p. 10).

## Technology and Cross Media

Discussions about technology within Southeast Asian Malay literature and Generation-Y reflect an article by Mawar (2018) that suggests a method and platform in empowering and encouraging the teaching of Malay literature at the tertiary level. A number of cross-media ways involve the latest application with integration of identified digital technology. In higher education, such as the Department of Malay Literature, University of Malaya, courses involve the integration of multi-disciplinary areas. Among these are management, education and computer technology. At the Department of Malay Arts, the courses offered also take into consideration both theory and practice of three main areas, namely visual arts, performance arts and management. This is offered through the Malay Animation Art and the Malay Digital Documentation Art. It is clear that the coordination of literature as a subject with technology media has been accepted as that which strengthens the learning and teaching process (Mazira et al., 2018).

Similar reformation has been implemented at the National University of Malaysia (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia or UKM) in which education band and Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) have become a trend. Among the VLE implemented in UKM are e-learning, mobile learning, blended learning, Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) and social media resources. The process and methodology for Malay literature teaching and learning should meet the current demands in the education system. Moreover, when the teaching and learning of literature are mostly attended by tertiary students who belong to Generation-Y and Z, they are the main "clients" of digital and media platform today.

Once again, through MASTERA activities, be they lecture or writing programmes, the education of literature is observed in the space of digital technology to be integrated together. For instance, the integration of literature across the disciplines of geography and media is done through geographical information system (GIS). A study by Rahimah and Tarmiji (2011) focuses on literature texts such as *Sejarah Melayu*, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, *Hikayat Seri Kelantan*, *Hikayat Seri Rama*, *Syakuntala*, *Dewi Putih, Liang Shan-Bo* and *Zhu Ying-Tai*. This focus has benefitted GIS media to analyse space that specifically studies the geographical aspects of mountains and their functions (Figure 3).

From the analysis of their study, Rahimah and Tarmiji (2011) found that the mountains are the background, or what is known as space, in
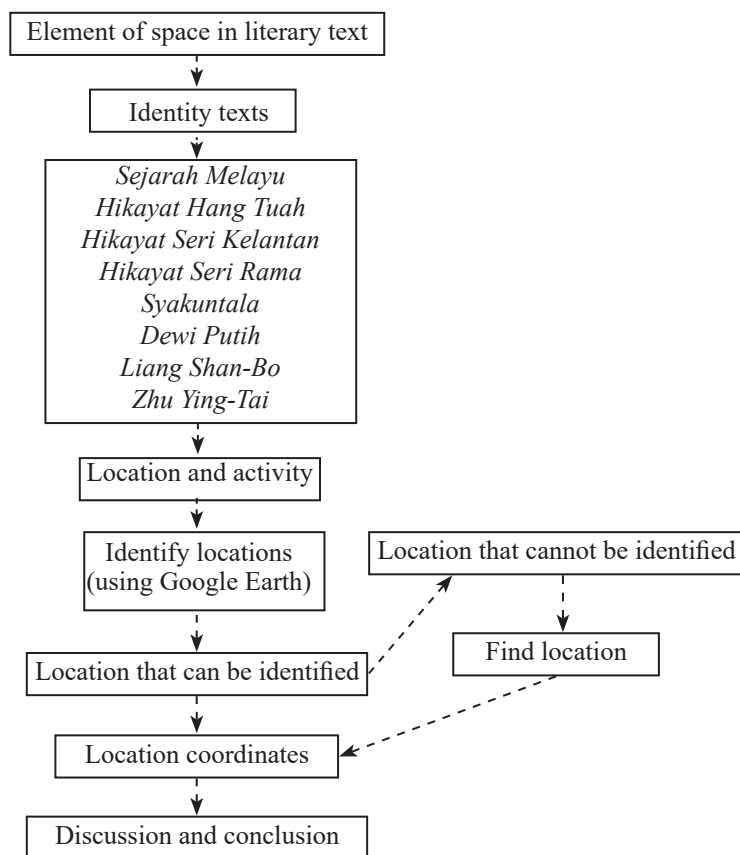
**Figure 3** Mountain and its functions, a GIS analysis of literary texts. (Rahimah & Tarmiji, 2011)

geography. The role of space as a narrative background gives meaning because it offers a social circle and various other activities of its characters. To study the position of space is by benefitting information technology (IT) such as GIS. According to Rahimah and Tarmiji, there are three types of IT in geographical study: remote sensing, Global Positioning System (GPS) and GIS. The researchers also used GIS method as a media with its nature of GIS because:

> … a computer-based information technology is used to obtain, manage, process and analyse, as well as display, spatial and nonspatial data… GIS can handle spatial data and attribute data. (Rahimah & Tarmiji, 2011:133)

As much as IT and geographical aspects are incorporated, Rahimah A. Hamid and Tarmiji Masron's study also forwards the issue of how these are used as the media and how literature can further grow in the space of 4IR. In the excitement of the advancement of digital technology and Internet of Things (IoT), what also receives the impact is the etiquette of education. This can be seen in a short story that recently won the first place in the category of new media in Utusan Group Literature Award 2017 (*Cerpen Media Baharu, Hadiah Sastera Kumpulan Utusan HSKU 2017*). The short story titled *Pondok Ayah* ("Dad's Hut") is written by Shahkang, who was a participant in MASTERA's Writing Programme 2018. The short story revolves around the integration of new media with religious school education.

Norshah Aizat Shuaib, who uses the pen name Shahkang, is a mechanical engineering lecturer at Universiti Malaysia Perlis. He received his philosophical degree from the University of Manchester, United Kingdom. His education background served as an inspiration for his short story.

Since 2016, the evaluation for the HSKU award has included a new category, which is New Media Short Story. It considers writings published in *Utusan Online*. Selected short stories are based on the criteria of positive elements, messages and information (Nor Asmah et al., 2019). The short story titled *Pondok Ayah* won in the selection because it fulfilled these criteria. Interestingly, it presents the conflict of idea between the two main characters that belong to two different generations, Kamil and his father. Kamil chooses the kind of education that is suitable for the current environment, which is new media. This is in total contrast with what his father hopes for Kamil, which is to be the proprietor of a traditional

religious school (*sekolah pondok*) as he wanted his son to pursue religious study in the Middle East.

Shahkang's narrative strategy takes his audience to a discussion that is grounded between the two generations with regard to technology and the connection with today's life. In fact, it becomes the essence of evaluation by the selection committee of HSKU for the New Media Short Story category. How the writer arranges his issues, ideas or solutions in the storyline in terms of technology incorporation using new media and how it can benefit many, particularly in terms of religious education system, are considered in evaluation. In the context of this article, the discussion focuses on how technology becomes the vehicle, or "the transport," which the character Kamil uses (Shahkang's ideology), specifically working on cross-media tasks. Kamil uses his experience with and knowledge of technology in his studies. He prepares religious software materials and prayers memorization applications. He also conducts distant learning for religious studies through virtual learning; in fact, his smartphone interactive application wins an international award.

The values of humanity translated in *Pondok Ayah* is about balance and respect in handling accelerated technology, a kind of grooming for Generation-Y of MASTERA. Kamil duly tries to balance between the demands of his modern era in contrast with the needs of traditional religious education that his father has much faith in. The new interpretation of religious education is integrated in such a manner through cross-media technology. It is again reminded at the beginning of this article about a verse from the Qur'an on how human beings are excellent in organizing their life in a way that is representative of God:

> While Allah created you and that which you do? (Qur'an, As-Saffat: 96)

> He is Allah the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner, to Him belong the best names. Whatever is in the heavens ad earth is exalting Him. And he is the Exalted in Might, the Wise. (Qur'an, Al-Hasyr:24)

## CONCLUSION

The discussion in this article partly demonstrates the situation of Malay literature in Southeast Asia, which is related to the world map of humanity, even in the vibrancy of current technology. The impact from such elasticity is interestingly beneficial to literature and can be enjoyed at all levels of

space. In the name of vehicle and media, this space keeps growing as well as giving and receiving benefits by supporting one another; together, it is accepted among many, including the young generation. This observation is seen in a community such as MASTERA with its annual activities that clearly and significantly benefit the young generation. It is also interesting to see that such consideration is in accordance with technology application, which is diligently applied by Generation-Y, who are now taking over literature across Southeast Asia. The vehicle for technology, which is incorporated through the International Southeast Asia Literary Seminar, MASTERA Comparative Literature Lecture Series and MASTERA Writing Programme, eventually refers to the band of blades about human intelligence in "creating" while writing, be it for the benefit of itself or otherwise. The Generation-Y of MASTERA should face it as a grooming process for them to bloom as laureates, with sincerity and responsibility. With all these, we are obviously drawn towards "creating," which can never challenge the greatness of God's "creativity." Thus, His kingdom of creativity brings to us loyalty to The One, The Great, and this is reflected in the way we appreciate and practice kindness in life.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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