



The **Epitome** */i'pitəmi/*

Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Kedah Branch

Capturing Life Lessons and Moments

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Copyright Page

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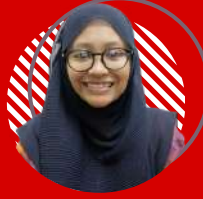


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Synopsis



The Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Kedah is thrilled to announce the release of the fourth edition of its e-magazine, *The Epitome*. This publication represents our steady dedication to cultivating creativity in language and literature.

The primary objective of *THE EPITOME* is to offer a platform for writers, educators, scholars, poets, and researchers can come together to exchange their ideas, discoveries, expertise, and narratives. Our special focus revolves around an array of creative writing genres, encompassing playwriting, short stories, songs, speeches, memoirs, literary journalism, humour writing, lyric essays, innovative essays, and personal essays, with a goal to embrace diverse linguistic expressions, with content available in four languages: English, Bahasa Melayu, Mandarin, and Arabic.





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Preface

Mr. Azlan Abdul Rahman
Head of Faculty
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Welcome to the fourth issue of *Epitome*, where creativity and imagination shine brightly. Within these pages, you will discover a rich tapestry of voices and visions—each piece a celebration of the limitless potential of words.

This issue of *Epitome* is more than a mere publication; it is a tribute to the art of storytelling in all its forms. Whether you are captivated by evocative poetry, enthralled by engaging short stories, or intrigued by insightful essays, we aim to present something that resonates with every reader.

We are passionate about the transformative power of literature, and we hope that this collection will inspire, challenge, and delight you. As you explore these pages, may you uncover new perspectives and experiences that enrich your own creative journey.

Thank you for embarking on this literary adventure with us.

Happy reading!



Editor InChief

Dear gentle readers,

Let me welcome you to our fourth edition of e-magazine, where we explore the beauty of life's journey. Our theme, "Capturing Life Lessons and Moments," encourages you to pause, reflect, and celebrate the wisdom that arises from everyday experiences.

Life is a mosaic of moments, each with the potential to teach us something profound, inspire change, or remind us of the surrounding beauty. Within these pages, we have unfolded stories, reflections, and insights that illuminate the lessons woven into the fabric of our lives. From the quiet wisdom found in fleeting moments to the power of life-changing events, this edition pays tribute to the learning that occurs beyond the classroom, in the heart of our daily lives.

Our contributors have poured their hearts into capturing these moments, sharing personal stories that resonate with authenticity and depth. You will find essays exploring the significance of small acts of kindness, articles reflecting on the lessons learned from adversity, and creative pieces celebrating the joy found in simple leisure. Each piece serves as a reminder that life's greatest lessons often emerge from the most unexpected places.

As you flip through this edition, we hope you find inspiration in the shared stories and perhaps discover a mirror to your own experiences. May these pages encourage you to appreciate the moments that shape you, learn from the challenges that test you, and embrace the wisdom that life offers at every step of your journey.

Thank you for joining us in exploring life's lessons and moments. We invite you to take your time, savour each piece, and maybe even gain a new perspective on the experiences that have shaped your own life.

Happy reading!

Warm regards,

Razanawati Nordin
Editor-in-Chief
THE EPITOME



Understanding and Embracing the Spectrum: The Power of Affirming Language in Supporting the Autism Community

Izza Syahida Abdul Karim, Wan Noor Faaizah Wan Omar, Azyyati Anuar, Azlyn Ahmad Zawawi

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It's truly amazing how the various rhythms in our world come together to create a beautiful symphony that celebrates the unique kaleidoscope of existence. Each note is special, and it's a privilege to experience such a diverse and wonderful world. One of these extraordinary notes is the autism community, a vibrant, intricate composition that deserves to be acknowledged, understood, and embraced with affirming language.

Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects how a person perceives and interacts with the world. It is called a "spectrum" because it encompasses various challenges and strengths that vary from person to person. Think of it, it's like having a one-of-a-kind operating system for the brain. Some autistic folks might be super talented at things like art, math, or remembering details because their brains have fantastic strengths.

What is an affirming language? Affirming language is a way of speaking or writing that focuses on the positive aspects of a person or a situation. It involves using words and expressions that are encouraging, respectful, and supportive. Affirming language aims to uplift and validate individuals, positively acknowledging their worth, experiences, and feelings.

In my recent conversation with Ms. Maisie, an openly autistic inclusivity trainer and curriculum designer from San Francisco, we explored various topics. From her, I learned about Ableist and Affirming Language. Ableist language is when words or phrases that might hurt or disrespect challenged people. Instead, we can use affirming language that is respectful and inclusive. For example, instead of saying, "He has autism spectrum disorder symptoms," we can say, "He increased the likelihood of autism with his keen attention to detail." This way, we focus on the person and their abilities rather than defining them by their disability.

Using affirming language helps create a more understanding and supportive community for everyone. Here are some examples regarding affirming language guidelines given by (Bottema-Beutel et al., 2021):

Instead of this....	Try this!
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	Autism, autistic, (try to avoid using 'disorder')
Person with ASD	Identify-first language (e.g., autistic person)
Cure/recovery	Focus on quality-of-life outcomes that prioritize what autistic people want for themselves
Normal/abnormal	Typical/atypical
Deficit/weakness	Area of difference
High-functioning autism	Has strength in
Low-functioning autism	May require support in



Our discussion was enlightening and eye-opening, and I left feeling inspired and motivated towards my goals. I believe that our conversation has the potential to inspire positive change, and I look forward to continuing our dialogue in the future. We should be mindful of the language we use when referring to autistic individuals, as some words and phrases can be hurtful. Let's work together to use language that is respectful and inclusive.

The power of language to shape our attitudes and perceptions is truly amazing. Regarding autism, using positive and affirming language is super important for creating a welcoming and compassionate environment. By celebrating the unique qualities and diversity of the autism spectrum, we can all learn and grow together. So, let's use our words to build bridges and connect. As we talk, let's try to understand each other better and not rely on stereotypes. Using positive language is not just about changing the words we use; it's about changing how we think. We need to recognize the strengths, talents, and unique perspectives that people on the autism spectrum bring to our communities. Consider the transformative impact of replacing "struggling with" with "navigating challenges." Instead of seeing it as a collection of shortcomings, let's recognize it as a unique and equally valuable way of experiencing the world. Affirming language invites us to focus on abilities rather than limitations, fostering an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive. In simpler terms, using affirming language means choosing words that make people feel good about themselves and show understanding and kindness. It helps create a positive and inclusive environment where individuals feel valued and accepted. This language is often used to boost confidence, promote self-esteem, and foster positive relationships. It's a way of communicating that emphasizes the good things and brings out the best in people.

As a society, we are responsible for addressing the barriers that perpetuate stigmas and misconceptions. People with autism may have challenges in social interactions, leading to misunderstandings. Stigma may arise when others misinterpret social difficulties as rudeness, lack of interest, or unusual behavior. A common misconception can contribute to negative perceptions of autistic individuals. We can all do our part by educating ourselves, spreading awareness and having open conversations. Together we can promote acceptance of individuals with autism and help counter the harmful misconceptions that exist. By using positive and affirming language, we can establish a foundation of empathy and support, creating a space where individuals on the autism spectrum can feel comfortable expressing themselves authentically. In Malaysia, an increase public awareness in promoting acceptance towards autism were seen, to engage with communities in encouraging understanding and empathy, as we aim to foster a society that values and celebrates diversity. When we use inclusive language, we open ourselves up to a journey of connection beyond any differences in neurodiversity. It's a great way to build bridges and bring people together. Let us cultivate a culture where individuals on the autism spectrum are not just heard but truly understood, where their voices are not drowned in the noise of misconceptions but resonate with the harmony of acceptance.



In conclusion, it's important that we take the lead in promoting positive language that acknowledges and celebrates the valuable contributions of the autism community. Let us create a narrative of acceptance, empathy, and gratitude, one word at a time. Let's make a difference and show our support for those who deserve it most.



Reference

Bottema-Beutel, K., Kapp, S. K., Lester, J. N., Sasson, N. J., & Hand, B. N. (2021). Avoiding Ableist Language: Suggestions for Autism Researchers. *Autism in Adulthood*, 3(1), 18–29. <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2020.0014>





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