



# *The* **Epitome** */i'pitəmi/*

Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Kedah Branch

*Theme,*  
**THE POWER OF EXPRESSION",  
"REFLECTIONS & REALITIES:**

Volume 1  
Issue 5

2025



*The*  
**Epitome**  
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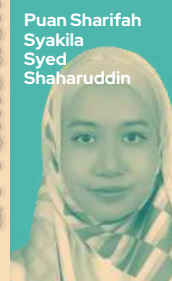


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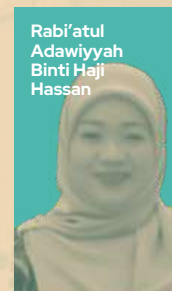
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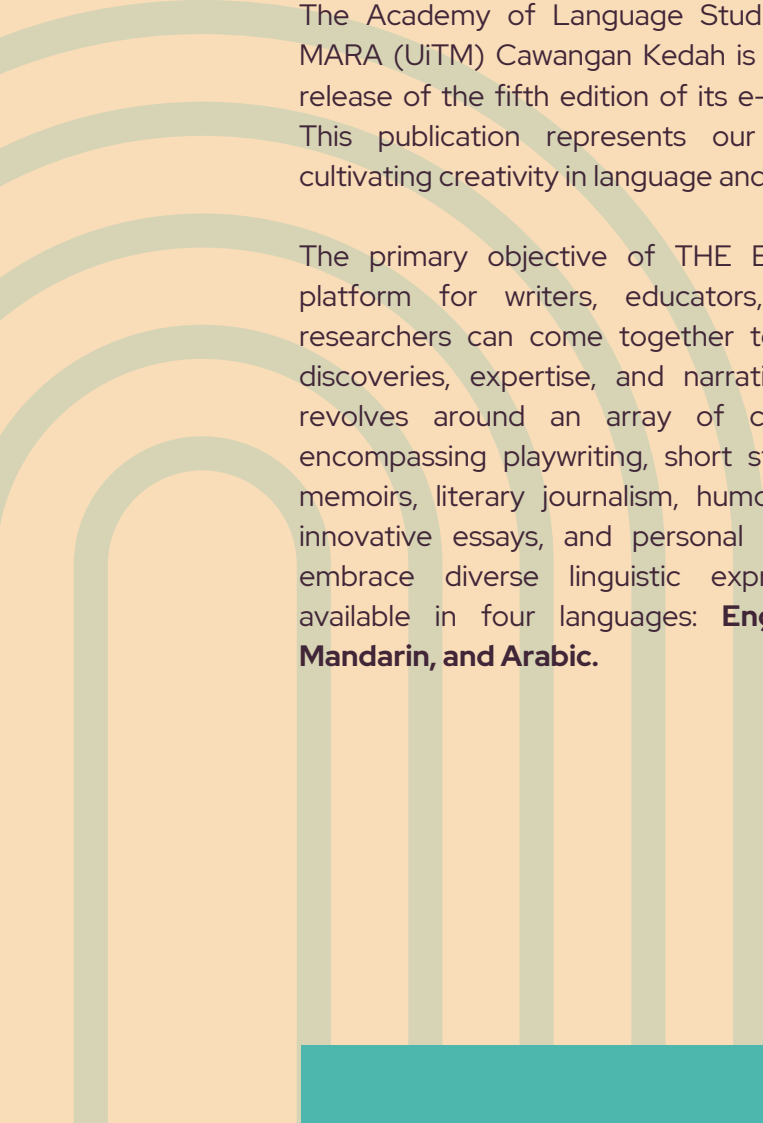
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# Synopsis



The Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Kedah is thrilled to announce the release of the fifth 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  
Akademi Pengajian Bahasa (APB)  
UiTM Kedah Branch

Welcome to the 5<sup>th</sup> issue of Epitome. This time, we step into a world where reflections shape realities, and where the simple act of expression holds incredible power.

Our theme, "Reflections & Realities: The Power of Expression," captures the spirit of this collection. It reminds us that every creative work is more than just an arrangement of words – it is a mirror, a window, and a bridge. Within these pages, you will encounter a rich variety of voices, each offering a unique glimpse into personal journeys, dreams, questions, and truths. Together, they form a tapestry that reflects both the world as it is and the world as we imagine it could be.

At Epitome, we believe that creativity is not just about telling stories; it's about giving shape to experiences that might otherwise remain unspoken. Through story that stirs the heart, stories that spark new ideas, and essays that invite reflection, we celebrate the courage it takes to put thoughts into words and share them with others.

This issue is not just a showcase of talent – it is an invitation. An invitation to pause, to listen, and to engage with the many realities presented here. It asks us to look beyond the surface, to find meaning in unexpected places, and to recognize the universal threads that connect us all through the simple yet profound act of expression.

As you journey through this edition, we hope you find pieces that resonate with you, challenge your perspective, and awaken new ideas. May these reflections inspire you to embrace your own realities – and perhaps even to express them in your own way.

Thank you for allowing Epitome to be part of your reading experience. We are honoured to share these voices with you.

Happy reading!



# Editor'snote

Presenting the fifth edition of THE EPITOME, a humble yet heartfelt collection of voices that reflect who we are, what we've experienced, and the truths we dare to express.

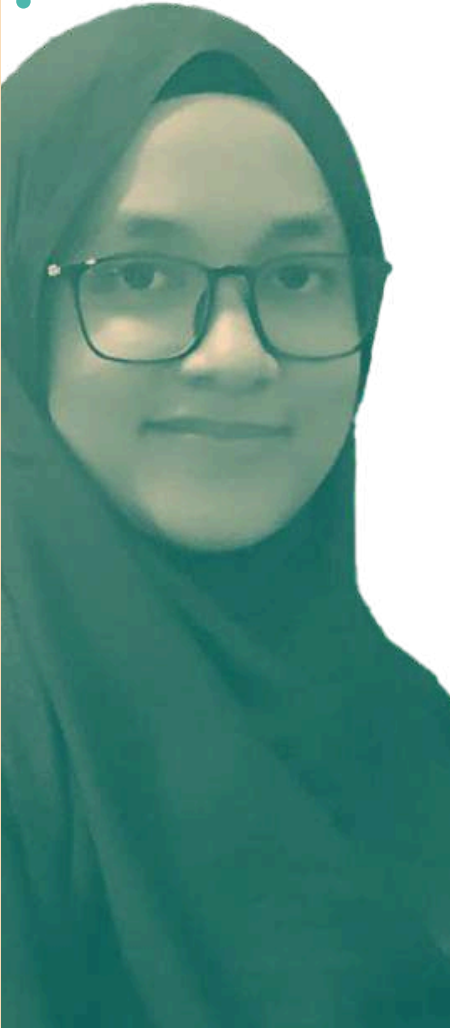
This publication's theme, "Reflections & Realities: The Power of Expression", embraces the essence of storytelling in all its forms—raw, whimsical, honest, and imaginative. Within these pages, our contributors navigate the labyrinth of identity, nostalgia, struggle, resilience, and creativity. Whether through memoirs, fiction, poetry, satire, or cultural musings, each piece represents a unique lens into the human condition, where language becomes both mirror and window—reflecting ourselves and revealing the world.

In a publication that welcomes expression in three languages—English, Bahasa Melayu, and Mandarin—we are reminded of the richness that lies in linguistic diversity. From humorous tales of online shopping to haunting narratives of secrets and self-discovery, from kampung chronicles to cross-cultural encounters, THE EPITOME offers a space for voices that often go unheard to finally be seen, read, and felt.

My deepest appreciation goes to the writers who have entrusted us with their stories, the editorial and design teams whose passion has brought this issue to life, and our readers who continuously support this platform as a space for creative and reflective exploration.

May this edition inspire you to reflect, to connect, and most of all—to express.

Warmly,  
**Dr. Nur Syazwanie Mansor**  
Chief Editor  
THE EPITOME 2025







# A Place Called Home

**Nur Fatima Wahida Mohd Nasir**

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**When I was a child, people used to ask me where I was from. When you're living in a foreign country, of course, that is understandably, a normal question to ask a kid. It was not the question that bothered me, but the answer. By the age of 10 years old, it became a habit of mine to question back the inquirer, "Do you mean where I was born, where I live now, or where my parents are from?". This, however, typically led to round eyes, awkward silence, and sometimes jaws dropping. People must have thought I was a strange kid, but the truth was, I genuinely didn't know where or which home to call as my own. To me, the mouth-watering taste of Phở at the street-stalls in Ho Chi Minh City felt like home. The sight of pine trees in Ottawa and the cold Washington breeze felt like home. Even the warmth of the Sumatran sun felt like home. Everywhere else felt like home except my own birth country, Malaysia.**

For millions of Third Culture Kids (TCKs) like me, the idea of home is as fluid as the borders they've crossed. Home isn't just a place one permanently lives, but an emotional experience or feeling of comfort and belonging. This is because TCKs are individuals raised in cultures other than their passport countries and live in different environments for most parts of their child developmental years (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001). Due to their transcultural upbringing, TCKs grow up without having a permanent home and would need to quickly adapt in new surroundings in order to effectively blend in and feel protected from the scorn of rejection within a community (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). For that, these unique individuals are also nicknamed as "international chameleons". However, when the time comes for them to move once again, TCKs would find themselves lost in the sense of 'home' which is closely linked with their sense of stability, direction, connection, and belonging (Hoersting, 2010).

As we all know, growing up is already very difficult. Thus, to grow up in multiple environments, with multiple cultures? That is something a child can barely grasp. It's not surprising why many research studies show that TCKs in their youth constantly endure personal identity crisis, cultural confusions, fear of attachments and relationships, social anxiety and isolation, questions of belonging, dealings of grief upon change and problems of social adaptation (Moore & Barker, 2012). All this is simply because they do not know where they actually belong. In fact, research shows that compared to Western and European TCKs, Asian TCKs often face more complex experiences and greater challenges when it comes to social integration. What's worse, studies show that for Asian TCKs, adjusting in their own home countries is even more challenging than adapting to other foreign countries (Long, 2016). The reason for this is because Asian societies put great value upon conformity, especially towards cultural norms, practices, and beliefs (Moore & Barker, 2012). So, basically when you have the features of an Asian but do not sound, behave and think like an Asian, well, people run away from you.





According to Mizutani and Waalkes (2023), even until now, these negative experiences would frequently cause Asian TCKs to feel disconnected, excluded, and left out from social groups of the local community.

Can you imagine feeling confused like a lost alien in your own home country? These studies definitely reflect the true reality of what is happening because in my case, the term 'minah celup' was not an unusual thing to hear. In addition, being sent to a boarding school in Kedah meant I had to survive 5 lengthy years of getting teased, bullied, pushed, laughed at, and belittled, especially because of my 'funny', 'Utara' accent.

Aitken (2008) explains that because of this complicated circumstance of 'homelessness', many Asian TCKs eventually decide to move elsewhere in order to settle down because they feel they adapt better in other foreign countries. Statistics from the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (2020) even shows that the population of the Malaysian diaspora currently stands at about 1 million emigrations to other countries such as Singapore, Australia, Brunei, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada.

Unfortunately, this includes Malaysian TCKs who migrate to other countries because of the lack of social acceptance and connection with the Malaysian local community. In my opinion, this is a huge loss and it shouldn't be happening.

**Every Malaysian deserves to call this beautiful country their home, including culturally mobile individuals like our Malaysian TCK friends. Thus, my message to you is simple; if, or when you encounter people who experience this way of life, please be kind and make them feel welcomed at home. Rise above your judgements and see them as human beings who have gone through immense pain, just so they could fit in, be accepted, and finally feel belonged. On the other hand, if you happen to be a Malaysian TCK yourself, please know this; you are amazing and you should be proud of yourself for the long years of patience, strength, and perseverance. Remember, you are not alone and the roller-coaster emotions you went through all this time are valid. Be sure to know that home isn't just a place - it's the love and resilience you carry within yourself. Wherever you go, you have the ability to create belonging because it's you who define what home means.**

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