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Why you speak like that one? Let Gen Y help you get it right

TODAY, The Sunday Times kicks off with a series in its Gen Y pages called English As It Is Broken. It looks at everyday English usage and why it is sometimes used incorrectly.

It aims to draw young readers by using examples of good and bad English from popular culture such as song lyrics and catch phrases from movies.

Common English language errors will be corrected by providing grammatically sound versions.

English As It Is Broken is a joint effort between The Sunday Times and the Ministry of Education (MOE), in conjunction with the National Library Board's Speak Good English Movement.

Four English language experts from MOE are helping in the campaign. They are master teachers Regina Davamoni, Connie Seng, Joy Lee and Jeyalaxmy Ayaduray.

Specialising in the English language, these master teachers help develop good teaching practice as well as model lessons and provide mentorship guidance to younger teachers. They operate beyond the school, at the cluster level. Currently, MOE has 15 master teachers.

The teachers hope to raise

awareness of the importance of speaking standard English and to change the perception that speaking well equates to using complicated words or an "ang moh" accent.

Madam Davamoni, who has been teaching English language and literature for 21 years, said: "We do not need to use bombastic words to speak good stan-



ard English."

The issue of using slang and abbreviations among the young is another area that the four language experts wish to address.

Madam Davamoni noted that youngsters tended to use abbreviations when SMS-ing or chatting online, which had led to them speaking the way they SMS — in broken English.

"If our students persist to

speak or even write in that manner, they will soon take that to be the norm. What is frightening is that they may think that it is grammatically correct."

Though their intentions are serious and the tasks challenging, the four volunteer ambassadors hope to get their message across in a fun way that reaches out to youths instead of berating them for their misuse of English.

Mrs Joy Lee, who has nearly 20 years of teaching experience, said: "The campaign can help by working with other partners to reach out to youths without making them feel like they are being taken to task for speaking less-than-perfect English.

"The intent is there, so now we have to work on packaging the message so that we can win youths over eventually."

About 50,000 copies of The Sunday Times will be distributed to the homes of needy students, paid from MOE's Opportunity Fund.

The aim is to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds cultivate a reading habit.