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Many tongues trip one up

IN A multilingual society like Singapore, no matter how hard we promote good English, it is difficult, if not impossible, to eradicate the influence of other languages and dialects in the way English is spoken or used.

It is common, for example, for Singaporeans to say "I prefer the blue colour one".

Some years ago, I saw a sign at a restaurant in a hotel in Katong, warning customers to "beware of your head". The same warning can now be found at the Popular Bookstore at the Majestic Building in Chinatown.

The fact of the matter is that only those who are linguists, or those who have been brought up in an English-speaking environment, will be able to speak and write good English. The rest of us will always have to grapple with some "outside" influence. Yet there is nothing to be ashamed of if our spoken English is not perfect, so long as it can be understood.

**DANIEL KOH
KAH SOON**

IHAVE lived in Australia, the US, and now India, in the last three years. I feel rather insulted when people remark that I "do not speak like a Singaporean". What they mean is that my English is grammatically proper. But can we blame them?

What is frustrating is that people from countries like Japan or France try hard to perfect their use of the English language. We, on the other hand, readily accept sub-standard English as a norm.

Let us begin damage control with Singlish. No matter what anyone says, it is not my idea of a "national identity". There is nothing special about speaking bad English. I am not suggesting that a Singaporean accent is bad, only the improper use of the language.

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