

Headline	Important that we learn to speak and write coherently		
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Important that we learn to speak and write coherently

I REFER to the letter, "English is all about communication" (ST, July 16), by Mr John Walker.

In a world where economies are closely intertwined, mastery of any language is ultimately for communication with people around the globe. We therefore need certain standards to abide by so we know what the universally accepted form should be.

The easiest way for English to be understood by all is in its purest form. While we can retain our unique local accent, it is important that we learn to speak and write coherently.

Mr Walker said one should speak English in a manner he or she feels comfortable, and that it is unseemly to correct Singaporeans on small errors.

If we were to take that stance, we would be going down a slippery slope — to what extent would flawed language be acceptable and, more importantly, comprehensible to others in school or at work? Are we going to pass a student in an English paper if we are able to figure out what he wishes to express, despite his getting all his tenses wrong?

I often come across business e-mail where people use incorrect words such as "personnels" instead of "personnel", and make basic errors in tenses such as "may wish to considering" instead of "may wish to consider".

Just as a person who gives a speech in good English earns himself more credibility, one who writes decent English creates a good impression for the organi-

sation he represents.

More often than not, someone who speaks well will tend to write well, and vice versa. When we raise our quality of spoken English, we will raise the level of our English proficiency in general. We therefore need to instil an appreciation for speaking good English during the formative years of a student's education.

In addition, the media should play its part; it can start by not allowing artistes who are not proficient in the language to host programmes in English.

Pockets of Singlish will linger in our daily use of English but it is important that we can revert to speaking and writing good English at will so that foreigners can understand us.

**GERALD KOH
KER JEN**

ON A post-office counter is a little cardboard box meant for litter labelled, "Please throw your rubbish here."

Step into any school and read the compositions displayed. You will be appalled at the many errors that have gone unnoticed by the teachers. Also, notices and slogans in classrooms and on staircases. Shouldn't the heads of department pay attention to these?

I pointed out the errors to a teacher. His answer? He was not an English-medium teacher. If the teachers or heads of department do not vet the work, who does?

S. RAJAMANICKAM