

Headline	Not just subject, language is scary		
Date	16 August 2003		
Media Title	The New Paper	Section	Forum
Page No	18	Size	



Not just subject, language is scary

Voodoo was first discovered in Africa. Voodoo is used for many purposes such as for love, healing and some even for disturbing others.

Some believe that just by having a voodoo doll everything can be done. It is not true. A voodoo doll is just like an ordinary doll, unless one adds energy to the doll but not everyone has the power to do this.

There are many types of voodoo. Some are used to cure, heal, protect, and some even to destroy. But it is warned that the user of Voodoo must not use it to harm or destroy someone. Voodoo is done for good purpose and not to harm or destroy someone.

Voodoo practising sounds scary as we must have seen in movies or read in story books. However, it is not true as voodoo can do wonders if it is used properly.

Dr Ong Siow Heng

I COMMEND Ms Angeline Song, and all the parents to whom she spoke, for raising the alarm over the choice of a comprehension passage on voodoo (Voodoo Homework Upsets Parents, TNP, Aug 12).

But what is as scary as the subject matter is perhaps the appalling use of the English language in the passage.

A cursory glance at just the first paragraph reveals this.

"Voodoo is used for many purposes such as for love, healing..." could be better phrased as "Voodoo is used for many purposes such as to make someone fall in love, to heal someone of a disease..."

"Disturbing others" is a colloquial expression. "Sometimes, it is used to cause a disturbance in someone's life" is preferable.

"...by having a voodoo doll..." could have been replaced with "...by possessing a voodoo doll..."

"It is not true" could be re-phrased as "This is not true".

"...unless one adds energy to the doll" is confusing. "Adds energy" is a term coined for this particular passage, so it ought to be put within inverted commas.

Unfortunately, there are many more errors of expression and grammar.

TEACHING WRONG ENGLISH:

The passage that a teacher gave

Primary 2 students for comprehension could have done with some editing.

PARENTS' ANXIETY RIGHT

I, too, would be as anxious as Mrs F Y Mak, Mr Sam Teo, Mrs Rosiati Maludin, Dr Lewis Lee and all the other parents if my children were presented with the idea of voodoo as having a factual basis.

However, I am particularly upset that such a poorly-written passage was chosen for an English lesson.

If our Speak Good English Movement is to have any chance of success, instances of the use of colloquial and ungrammatical English during the formative years must be identified, purged and exorcised.