

<b>Headline</b>	Please speak proper English when you take his cab		
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# Please speak proper English when you take his cab

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**T**HIS man claims to be the only taxi driver here to have the BBC on all the time in his taxi.

And Mr P Rames, 55, not only tries to speak good English almost all the time, he even corrects the grammar and pronunciation of his passengers.

"Most of the time, I correct the Indians because they are from my community and won't get annoyed," he said.

Of course, he does this subtly, so that the passengers won't be offended.

And most of the time, they aren't. Usually, they just smile and nod, he said.

"I don't see why we can't speak good English all the time," he said.

"We don't have to speak like an Englishman but we have to at least take the effort to pronounce the words properly."

The only time he speaks Singlish is when he is talking to old ladies, "to put them at ease".

Mr Rames has been a cabbie for nine years.

And 20 years of listening to the BBC has made him more conscious of the way he speaks.

## WORKED IN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

"I used to work in the construction industry before I became a taxi driver and the senior staff were all British, Australian or American.

"They only spoke in English but it was easy to understand because they pronounced the words clearly and used only simple words," said Mr Rames, who left school after O levels.

Their habit of listening to the BBC rubbed off on Mr Rames and he continued listening to it even after he went off to Brunei to work.

"It was the only station with 24-hour coverage. I could get any news from there," he said.

Now, listening to the BBC could be more of a necessity than choice.

"Local radio is bad. When they are reading the news, it's okay," he said.

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— Taxi driver P Rames (right), on why he prefers the BBC

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Mr Rames thinks this is true of most Singaporeans.

He gave the example of a young man he met six years ago.

"He told me he wanted to go to Roys Road in the Orchard area, but there wasn't such a road.

"So I drove and casually asked him how the road name was spelled and he spelled Lloyds Road."

He is worried that if these mistakes are not corrected they may become common usage.

"What if one day Lloyds Road really becomes Roys Road?"

"Tourists will say they want to go to Lloyds Road and taxi drivers tell them there's no such road," he said. "It's such a disgrace!"

That is why he tries to correct the English of his passengers whenever he can.

However, Mr Rames thinks good service is not just about speaking good English.

"What I can do for them is more important. Speaking properly is one way of making them understand what I'm doing," he explained.

His years of making the effort to speak good English have now been recognised.

He was asked by the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) committee to act in a skit last week.

The skit involved four others — a librarian, teacher, receptionist and a parrot — debating whether proper English can be used in a non-English speaking environment.

This year's SGEM hopes to improve the level of spoken English among those working in the service-related industry.

