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» SPEAKING GOOD ENGLISH

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IN THE lunch interview with Professor Koh Tai Ann ("You see there got, got. Not there, no got"; The Sunday Times, May 15), the question asked was why, after generations of Singaporeans being schooled in English, we are still not speaking English well.

As a teacher, I believe that this is largely due to the fact that, somewhere along the way, we dropped the teaching

of English through grammar. Instead, we opted for teaching the language using sentence patterns. This is a grave mistake.

The older generation would remember how our teachers used to drill grammar into us. This drilling lasted a lifetime and the English Language was spoken correctly.

When I started teaching in Singapore in the 1970s, I was

rather perturbed to see that the language was taught basically using sentence patterns and not by grammar drilling.

Having learnt the language strictly through grammar, I deviated from the norm and started introducing grammar into my English periods.

I also drilled grammar into my two sons at home and though they resented it for the simple reason that their teachers in school did not expect this of them, I persevered. The result — two children grew into adults speaking grammatically correct English.

While watching the Tamil

Award Presentation programme on Vasantham Central last Saturday, though impressed by the high standard of presentation, I was appalled by the poor command of English of the winners. Nervousness is one thing, poor English is another.

No number of "Speak Good English" campaigns will work if grammar is left out in the teaching of English. Grammar is vital in the teaching of a language that, for most of us, is not our mother tongue.

*Padmini Kesavapany
(Mrs)*