

Headline	How can you say, 'How can?'		
Date	2008-08-24		
Media Title	The New Paper (Sunday)	Section	News
Page No	2-3	Size	49x9cm
Description	The Speak Good English Movement will soon be launching yet another campaign. There is room to improve the spoken English of TV and radio presenters.		

THE BUZZ

How can you say, 'How can?'

REGGIE J
reggie@spg.com.sg

IT IS in the news again. The Speak Good English Movement will soon be launching yet another campaign. Bookshops can get into the act by having storytelling sessions. Read it out loud to stimulate the imagination. Many teachers in the West also promote this practice in schools as the most important component in literacy learning. But a lecturer friend of mine, who once taught teachers, asked if teachers are prepared to lead the good English charge.

Perhaps we should start by improving the spoken English of kindergarten teachers. We are quite often petty about the way the "significant others" who work here speak English. But I say: Those in glass houses shouldn't. We need, first, to listen to ourselves speaking English before lambasting foreign workers about their accent, their inability to be understood and how they speak. Here, where education is the golden rule, it is disappointing that the quality of the spoken word does not seem to have been emphasised at a very early school stage. I will forever be grateful to a certain Frank James of SH, who taught us to speak English real good... even though I now take liberties with written English. Somehow, the way we speak English does not quite

reflect the supposed quality of education that Singapore would like to boast about. For now, I am not quite sure if the blame falls squarely on the shoulders of teachers and parents. But it's a good starting point. Or can it be that MediaCorp, which has been known to churn out a string of programmes that inadvertently promotes "Singlish", is equally to blame? Yes, we all speak Singlish. It's unifying and can be funny and apt. But it has its place. And yes, there is room to improve the spoken English of TV and radio presenters. And please don't say: How can? **- The writer is a former Singapore marketing professional**

TV presenters do it, so... can, ah?

FROM READER PETER DORNEY

I READ your earlier column on this subject, Reggie, and I too have been "disturbed" by the ongoing mispronunciations of many of the TV news readers. I've even called MediaCorp and asked them to tell Subhila Krishnan that the word "laboratory" is not pronounced "labary". But she still does it. During the last haze season, one of them even pronounced the verb "enveloped" as "on-enveloped" - from the noun "envelope" (used for letters). And the word "cooperation" manages to continually come out as "corporation".

Melissa Hyak manages to slip the odd 'n' into words. Surely the letter can't be present in the written text on the teleprompter. And as for David Nye, he reads the news like no one else - pausing mid word, dragging out words, slipping in pauses and spaces all over the place. All rather confusing. Like you, I have mentioned to MediaCorp that the Speak Better English Movement can hardly be impressed with these ongoing mistakes. Well, I've written three novels. So, if anyone asks for my services, if they are uncertain about certain pronunciations, my answer is: Can.

Yes, we all speak Singlish. It's unifying and can be funny and apt. But it has its place. And yes, there is room to improve the spoken English of TV and radio presenters.
- Columnist Reggie J