

Headline	Speak good English? 4 in 10 S'poreans say 'no need lah'		
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Description	At the launch of this year's Speak Good English Movement, a survey of 1,243 Singaporeans aged 15 to 39, found that forty one percent of Singaporeans polled that they do not see any need to improve of English language standards here.		

Speak good English? 4 in 10 S'poreans say 'no need lah'

By Tessa Wong

SPEAK proper English? Forty-one per cent of Singaporeans polled in a recent Speak Good English Movement survey do not see any need.

This is despite an eight-year effort by the movement to raise standards through advertising campaigns and classes.

The survey of 1,243 Singaporeans aged 15 to 39, released yesterday at the launch of this year's language drive, found that this blase attitude was especially rampant among those in their late 20s. Nearly half of those aged 25 to 29 said they felt their English was already up to scratch, and that there was no need for improvement.

This sentiment was prevalent among many others too - about 65 per cent of all respondents claimed their standard of spoken English has risen in the last two years. Such people will be among three groups that the movement will target this year. The others are Singaporeans who want to speak good English but cannot, and those who can speak the language well.

This approach of focusing efforts on a few groups marks a change for the movement, which targeted all in the past.

One of the key thrusts of this year's campaign is building confidence and providing resources for those who want to improve their English, and those who think there is no need to do so.

The campaign's motto, 'I Can', alludes to this, and classes and proficiency tests will be lined up to help the public.

For those who speak English well, the main aim is to get them to avoid lapsing into Singlish when communicating with those who speak the language badly. This, the movement hopes, will encourage the latter to practise and improve their English.

More information can be found at www.goodenglish.org.sg

Besides people who see no reason to improve their English, another area of concern is service staff. The survey compared the standard of English spoken by service staff, superiors, business associates, family members, colleagues and peers, and retail and service workers fared the worst.

To improve the standard of English, the movement has launched a course on the language together with the Singapore Retailers Association.

The guest of honour at yesterday's launch, Mr Lim Boon Heng, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, urged Singaporeans to heed the example of China.

Referring to the recently released documentary Mad About English, which is about the Chinese fervour to learn the language, he said: 'If we do not admit that we do not know, we will never learn. It will always be difficult in the beginning and people will laugh...(but) the embarrassment should not stop us from improving ourselves.'