

Publication :	IN Newspaper
Date :	24 July 2006
Page:	Pg 08 & 09
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Headline:	Mind your (English) Language

**W**u Qi Yong loves speaking English — when he is quarrelling with his sister. “English has more abusive words lah,” said the 15-year-old Secondary 3 student.

But when he is not angry, Qi Yong relaxes into Mandarin, both at home and in school. He does speak to his teachers in English, but it is “scary”.

“It’s awkward speaking proper English, too formal. Who really talks like that? I think it’s quite nice.”

He is one of an estimated 750 Ang Mo Kio Secondary School students who do not speak proper English — choosing to “shoot the breeze” in “Chinglish”, a cocktail of broken English interspersed with Mandarin, or Singlish.

Gossip — whether in the canteen at lunch or on the bus ride home — is just more enjoyable in the mother tongue, these students say.

They, and thousands of others like them, are the target of the Speak Good English Movement 2006.

The drive, which will be launched tomorrow, will also focus on other Singaporeans under 40 years of age.

Organisers like the British Council, the National Library Board and the Singapore Retailers Association will pitch in, too.

The National Institute of Education, one of the 17 partners of the project, will hold workshops for every graduating primary school teacher each year to make sure that they understand the importance of speaking English well.

Even the Ministry of Defence is chipping in, organising word games at the nearly 200 roadshows it holds each year.

**MAKING PROGRESS**  
Teachers told IN that the annual Speak Good English Movement, which began in the year 2000, has helped improve the standard of spoken English in schools here. Said Mrs Chua Yen Ching, who has been a principal for six years: “Students have started to be conscious of the way they speak, so they are starting to make an effort to speak well.”

The movement’s main message this year is: Be understood not just here, but around the world.

“Most of the world’s business is done in English, and if you get a nice job overseas later, it will not do to have your business partners go ‘what?’ whenever you speak.”

Said Mrs Chua: “There has been a marked improvement, but there is always room for more. Students spend about eight hours a day in school — so that’s where the effort should be most intense.”

**JOURNALS AND MORE**  
Many schools have already begun getting their students to brush up on their English language skills.

Ang Mo Kio Secondary makes its students keep a portfolio — of their essays, diary entries and English test papers — so that they can keep track of their progress.

Even their math classes require students to keep journals, so that they can log the steps they take to solve a math’s sum.

All schools will receive a CD-ROM



**THE ANNUAL SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH MOVEMENT KICKS OFF TOMORROW IN ITS TIRELESS EFFORT TO STAMP OUT**

**THE SINGLISH ‘PANDEMIC’.**

**JESSICA LIM FINDS OUT**

**WHAT IS IN STORE IN THIS TIME ROUND**

**AND IF ITS EFFORTS ARE PAYING OFF.**

speaks Mandarin, so if I speak English, then I can’t even talk to them.”  
Then how can the problem be addressed?

**LET’S FIX IT**  
Some students suggested increasing the number of English lessons, while others thought making students go to the library after school would get them used to reading English books, and eventually speaking well.

One — very earnestly — suggested using American television shows such as *Scrubs* and *Desperate Housewives* in lessons.

But there is a limit to what can be done in the classroom, say teachers.

“Students have to be proactive because schools can only do so much,” said Ms Eurine Soo, 28, who has been a teacher at Teck Whye Secondary for three years. “The best thing we can do is inspire the students to love the language.”

Natalie Koh, 15, a Sec 3 student at Greenview Secondary School, agreed. “When teachers force us to go to the library, we chat and don’t read because we don’t want to.”  
“We students must first want to speak English well ourselves.”

You can start by reading Pages 12 and 13 of this week’s IN.

Which English words do you or your friends find the most difficult to pronounce? Log on to <http://www.stomp.com.sg/stink/> to spill the beans.

**OH BRADDER!**

- **ESCAPE:** Many pronounce this as “you have mastered the prefix ‘ex’, while ‘ex’ has no part to play in ‘escape’.”
- **FILM:** It is often mispronounced as “compu” to get around the combination it right.
- **INTERPRET:** Many often make an by the word “interpretation”. Do not
- **ANOTHER:** This word is many a components to say “a nother”. This components of a phrase. In this cas
- **UTMOST:** This word means “of utmost”, and definitely not “outmost”.
- **VOLUPTUOUS:** This might be correctly. You would not want to “voluptuous”.
- **BROTHER:** This word is often your body. The problem for mo

**WHAT SA**

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“When I speak in English, convert to English — it’s I think teachers should English lessons to force — Wong Ji Bong, 15, Sec 3, I

“Teachers should reward. I think that is the other all the time. TI — Muhammad Faiz Bador,

“I think schools should use magazines interest us. Teachers students use English words — Lee Wai Ling, 14, Sec 3, Ngee

**MORE HOLISTIC APPROACH NEEDED**  
The Ministry of Education has justifiably focused its efforts on improving curriculum and instruction in English language classrooms. But the ministry should seek to foster more holistic language learning environments in schools. One way to achieve this is to encourage cross-curricular and inter-disciplinary collaborations among all teachers regardless of subject specialisations, educational background, and nationality. — Mr Warren Mark Liew (ST Forum, June 29)

## OH BRADDER!

- **ESCAPE:** Many pronounce this as "excape". Good news is, if you say "excape", you have mastered the prefix "ex", which means out or beyond. But the bad news is, "ex" has no part to play in "escape".
- **FILM:** It is often mispronounced as "fillum" or "film", both of which are wrong. It is difficult for our tongues to get around the combination of "l" and "m" – but if you know the difference, you can say it right.
- **INTERPRET:** Many often make an error with this word, pronouncing it as "interpretate", influenced by the word "interpretation". Do not create new words, we already have "interpret".
- **ANOTHER:** This word is many a time lazily pronounced as "nother". Some also split up the components to say "a nother". This is a misperception of where to draw the line between different components of a phrase. In this case, there is none.
- **UTMOST:** This word means "of the highest degree" – but it should not be pronounced as "upmost", and definitely not "outmost".
- **VOLUPTUOUS:** This might be a tricky word for many, but if you are going to use it, pronounce it correctly. You would not want to make a mistake and call someone "volumptuous" when you mean "voluptuous".
- **BROTHER:** This word is often pronounced as "bradder", which sounds awfully like an organ in your body. The problem for most speakers is making the "th" sound.

## WHAT SAY YOU?

“ Teachers should conduct more oral exams, because my friends speak more English only when an oral exam is coming up. ”

– Shaun Seow, 15, Sec 4, Serangoon Secondary School

“ When I speak in English, I have to think it out in my head in Mandarin first, then convert to English – it's very tiring. It's hard to make speaking English a habit. I think teachers should enforce a rule that no Mandarin should be spoken during English lessons to force people like me to speak it. ”

– Wong Jia Rong, 15, Sec 3, Ang Mo Kio Secondary School

“ Teachers should reward students with prizes if they manage to speak English all day. I think that is the only way, because all my friends just speak in Malay to each other all the time. They won't change that easily. ”

– Muhammad Faiz Bakar, 13, Sec 1, Tampines Secondary School

“ I think schools should use magazines like *IN* to promote reading, because such magazines interest us. Teachers can also create innovative games to make students use English words. Games like charades would be very popular. ”

– Lee Wan Ling, 14, Sec 3, Ngee Ann Secondary School

THE  
BIG  
STORY  
THIS  
WEEK

### ANYTHING BUT SINGLISH

Creating a better English-language environment for children is, to my mind, clearly a worthwhile thing to do. In school, having native English-language teachers can make a small difference. In the home, parents can do their part by using the best English they know. And if they are not fluent in the language, do the kids a favour and use Mandarin, not Singlish. – Deputy political editor Chua Mui Hoong (ST, June 24)

PHOTOS: LAU FOOK KONG