



Here's your online English teacher

BY DEEBA VARADARAJU

EVER wondered about the difference between the words "advice" and "advise", or how to pronounce "abalone" properly?

These and other questions on English-language usage have been sent daily to Stomp, ever since it launched its English As It Is Broken section almost three years ago.

The section, a collaboration between Singapore's No. 1 citizen-journalism and social-media website and the Speak Good English Movement, answers questions on the use of English and showcases examples of bad English spotted in everyday situations.

A panel of experts is tasked with answering the questions, and the answers are updated thrice weekly.

Stomp's English As It Is Broken section is Singapore's only online channel that focuses on usage of the English language.

The light-hearted but informative answers make learning English on Stomp an informal and fun experience.

The Freeze Frame section highlights signs and notices that mangle the English language.

These are contributed by eagle-eyed Stompers.

One of them is Stomper Quak, who came across an incorrectly translated sign at a soup stall which read: "A bowl of soup per day, kick the doctor away".

He snapped a photograph of the sign and sent it to Stomp.

The panel responded: "Kicking the doctor away sounds quite painful. Perhaps, they can just say 'keep the doctor away'."

Another reason for the success of the microsite is that it helps confused Stompers clear their doubts on the use of colloquial and Singlish terms.

Recently, Stomper Angie asked whether the Singlish term "chope" could be used interchangeably with the term "reserve".

The panel clarified: "Chope' is Singlish while 'reserve' is English. These two words are generally used almost interchangeably but if you want to be understood by everyone, then we recommend that you say 'reserve' instead of 'chope'."

Twenty-year-old undergraduate Veronica Lim is an avid reader of the English As It Is Broken site, and appreciates its

light-hearted approach.

She said: "It's good to have a resource that focuses on Singaporean English. There is no other website in Singapore that does that."

In effect, the English As It Is Broken section is a "FAQ" on the local use of English.

"The section provides quick, fuss-free answers to common questions. It's an effective learning resource," said Miss Eliza Koh, a teacher who uses the Stomp microsite as a language tool in classrooms.

Readers also stand to win prizes by taking part in two contests hosted on the section.

The Grammar Ninja contest rewards people for spotting and correcting poor English used in public places.

The Stomper who submits the best entry for the month wins a \$100 Kinokuniya voucher.

You can also win Reader's Digest books - worth \$100 - each week by answering five questions based on the content in the section.

Go to english.stomp.com.sg now to improve your English.

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SPOT THE ERRORS	
	<p>WRONG WORD AND PHRASE The person who made the sign probably meant "throw" instead of "through". But "Don't throw here" isn't right. The sign should say "No littering", or "No littering of cigarette butts here" to be specific.</p>
	<p>INCORRECTLY TRANSLATED Literal translations from Chinese to English don't always work. How about changing the sign to say "Buy 3 items and get 1 free!"? That should be succinct and clear enough for this store's promotion.</p>
	<p>'FLYING GOLF BALLS' SOUNDS ODD We think that "flying golf balls" sounds strange. As there's probably a golf driving range nearby, how about saying "Beware of golf balls. Driving-range area"?</p>
	<p>SERIOUS TYPO Perhaps the convenience store is selling a special bun called "Janpinese"? Or maybe the brand name is "Janpinese"? No? We didn't think so either. The sign should probably say "Japanese".</p>
	<p>WRONG WORD The signmaker is probably confused between the words "house" and "home". This shop's sign should say "household" and not "homehold". There is no such word as "homehold".</p>