

Headline	She works hard to improve her English		
Date	13 th Sep 2009		
Media Title	The New Paper on Sunday	Section	Enjoy
Page No.	Pg 24	Size	N.A.
Description	Coming from a Mandarin-speaking family, Miss Singapore Intercontinental, Tan Yong Ying, shares her experience of pushing herself to improve her English language proficiency.		

She works hard to improve her English

IT'S been a hectic year for Tan Yong Ying, 21, a Nanyang Technological University chemistry undergraduate.

Between schoolwork and training for Miss Intercontinental, she had plenty on her plate.

Perhaps exhaustion is the reason the 1.68m beauty seemed reticent, unlike her predecessor Lilian Lee, who was all charm.

But when asked about the flak that other beauty queens received this year, Yong Ying livened up.

"People are too critical and look only at the very negative side and they don't know what goes on behind the scenes," she said.

She added that they should be more supportive of the girls, because there are girls with beauty and brains who are deterred from taking part by the criticism.

She said Miss Singapore World Ris Low, who was slammed for her interview on RazorTV, was just raw and nervous.

She admitted her own English was not very fluent. At home, Mandarin is the language of choice 90 per cent of the time.

So over the last year, she pushed herself to watch more English-language shows, and speaking and reading more English. She was also trained to sing in English and Mandarin to improve the tone of her voice.

But does she feel up to speaking in front of an international audience?

"I'm nervous about it, but I'm confident I won't be making a fool of myself," she said.

It is easy to see how Yong Ying managed to win over the sponsors. Polite and humble, she had no airs about her.

After she won Miss Singapore Sweetheart 2008 (the qualifying contest in Singapore for Miss Intercontinental), she was given a year's training.

But not without a price. After she was trained in professional makeup, Ms Jackeline Carter made her teach a course at Academy IG, which the former co-owns. She was even asked to work as a receptionist, for a small salary.

Used to hard work

But Yong Ying, who flew to Belarus for Miss Intercontinental on Friday, is no stranger to hard work.

The studious bespectacled girl was a member of the student council in Meridian Junior College.

"Academically, I wasn't doing too bad, and I was reserved – still quite reserved," she said.

Then she decided to take part in school and inter-varsity beauty contests to gain more exposure.

Miss Singapore Sweetheart was her first national beauty contest.

"Since I have the height, why not give it a try?" she said.

So off went the glasses, and on came the glam.