

Headline	Speak better, please		
Date	19 th Sep 2009		
Media Title	The Straits Times	Section	<i>Life! mailbag</i>
Page No.	Pg E8	Size	N.A.
Description			

We received 40 letters in response to the story on Miss Singapore World Ris Low's command of English (My Bigini Is Boomz, LifeStyle, Sept 13). Here is a selection

Speak better, please

Ms Jennifer Yin, head secretariat of the Speak Good English Movement, said she hears Ms Low's speech patterns in young people on the train.

I am not sure what train she has been taking but from where I come from, young people do not say "rad" for "red", "preens" for "prints" or "zibbra" for "zebra".

We need to remember that beauty contests are platforms to showcase Singapore to the world.

We may not win. We may not even get to the semi-finals. But the contestant serves as an ambassador of our nation.

Do we want other countries to know Singapore as a place that "boomz"?

E-Ying Wee

IT IS NOT EVEN SINGLISH

I would not say that Ms Low was speaking Singlish in the RazorTV clip because most Singaporeans cannot make out what she was saying.

How can she represent Singapore? She will give others the wrong impression of the country.

How can the pageant organiser argue that Miss Singapore World is a beauty contest and not an oratorical contest? Surely we want people who are good-looking and who can also carry themselves well.

I hope she will attend some speech-training classes before leaving for the pageant.

Silvia Ho

PLAIN, BAD ENGLISH

Bad English is bad English. There are no two ways about it. I cannot believe that the chairman of the Speak Good English Movement spoke up for her.

Bryan Wong

BEAUTIES WITH BRAINS, PLEASE

Ms Yin said many Singaporeans speak like Ms Low.

Well, pardon me. Lots of Singaporeans do not get to represent Singapore at the Miss World contest.

Ms Tracy Lee, an events director at ERM World Marketing which organised the local pageant, said the ability to speak proper English is not important as looks are more important in a beauty contest.

That is a strange statement. Surely beauty queens must have the whole package: good looks, wit and intelligence.



Ms Ris Low (above) is an ambassador for the country in the Miss World contest, so she needs to brush up on her English, say Singaporeans. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

We must choose a representative who can hold her own on the world stage. I hope that Ms Low will work hard to improve her English and do Singapore proud in December.

Dennis Saw Teng Sheng

ENSURE GOOD ROLE MODELS

The sad reality in Singapore is that many English-language teachers have a less-than-acceptable command of the language themselves.

When they use bad English in the class-

room (with cringeworthy terms such as "luggages" and "fellow classmates") or fail to correct the bad English used by their students, the cycle is perpetuated.

How do we get Singaporeans to speak better English? Let's start with those in positions of influence.

Make sure they get their English right so that they can be good role models to others.

Geraint Wong

EXCUSES ARE A COP-OUT

We must not make excuses for Ms Low and say that many Singaporeans speak like her. That is a cop-out.

I hope she will enrol in a crash course to improve her English. Please do Singapore proud and speak proper English.

Jennifer Loh

NEED TO MAKE HERSELF UNDERSTOOD

What were the judges thinking of when they selected Ms Low?

Of course a beauty contest is not an oratorical or debating contest. But we are not asking Ms Low to debate United States President Barack Obama. Surely Miss Singapore must be articulate and can make herself understood?

Ivan Ng

QUESTIONS AT FINALS ARE TOUGH

When Ms Low goes to the Miss World contest in South Africa, she will face a panel of judges who will quiz her on a host of issues. You can be sure that they will ask more than just what she will wear when walking down Orchard Road.

If she cannot even answer a simple question properly, I wonder how she will be able to tackle the more complicated questions at the Miss World finals.

Alice Lim

Miss Singapore Universe 1998

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ADORABLE WAY OF SPEAKING

I think the way Ms Low speaks is adorable. She really "shouts me". It is Singlish of the highest order and I *lurve* it.

Yes, we can make fun of Singlish for its peculiar pronunciation and queer sentence structure but it is our own self-evolved lingua franca.

The Speak Good English Movement chairman Goh Eck Keng is right. When we laugh at Ms Low, we are laughing at half of Singapore (maybe more).

I used to lament that we had no sense of language identity. Travelling around Asia, I have observed that every country has its unifying patois. The Thais speak Thai, Malaysians speak Malay tinged with English pronouns, the Indonesians have Bahasa and Filipinos have Tagalog.

We had nothing until Singlish came along.

Let's rejoice. Just as the Chinese have Chinglish and the Japanese have Japlish, we can take great pride in having our own Singlish.

And like any other language, it will evolve. You cannot stop it because this is the language of comfort and convenience.

We feel good when we hear it. It is warm, witty, humorous and musical. And it has such wonderful words.

Just the other day, I heard a Singapore Airlines stewardess say: "Thankchew for frying with Sinkapor Allies, a member of Style Lions."

What on earth was that? I had to think for a few seconds before connecting the dots. "Style Lions" is "Star Alliance". But what a great name - Style Lions!

As for Ms Low, she is just gorgeous and "Boomz", whether or not she wears a "piss of rad bigini" or "duck gins with leopard and zibbra preens".

If she needs a dress that "shouts" her for the big occasion, I offer to buy her one and I will get my cousin Tina Tan-Leo (the owner of The Link boutique) to style her, too.

Go for it, Ms Low. Do us proud.

Dr Woffles Yiu

SENDING A WRONG MESSAGE

By allowing a contestant with a questionable command of English to represent Singapore, are we sending a message to young people that it is all right to speak English badly?

Alvin Ang Shau Wee

JUDGES TO BLAME

While Ms Low's English leaves a lot to be desired, let us not forget that the fault lies with the judges who selected her.

Justin Tang

TEACHERS AT FAULT

Don't blame Ms Low. She was badly taught and never corrected by her teachers.

Samantha Yim