

<b>Headline</b>	Getting it right on campus notices		
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<b>Description</b>	Signs of bad English found in various parts of Singapore. (Part 4 of 4)		

# Getting it right on campus notices

This is the last of a four-part series on the Speak Good English Movement by The Straits Times. **Leow Si Wan** looks out for notices, posters and banners displaying bad English at universities here.

INSTITUTES of higher learning are not immune to grammatical errors in their public notices on banners and posters, checks at the three universities in Singapore have revealed.

When The Straits Times visited the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Singapore Management University (SMU) two months ago and scrutinised notices at their premises for mistakes, the lapses tended to be in student-prepared material.

Slip-ups were occasional. But the ones found showed basic errors of usage, although one or two were merely typographical.

For instance, a student poster at SMU read: "Write your most memorable freshmen experince in 200 words or less".

"Freshmen" should have been the singular "freshman" and the word "experience" was wrongly spelt, said language expert K.K. Seet, a senior lecturer at the Department of English Language and Literature at NUS.

SMU's director of the Office of Student Life, Ms Bernadette Toh, said the students regretted the mistakes. "Unfortunately, they spotted the errors after their fliers were printed."

At NTU, more mistakes were found largely on non-official notices. A Staff Recreation Club poster displayed awkward phrasing such as: "From just \$0.50, \$2.50 or \$3.50 a month (for staff) and \$8.00 for spouses, you can enjoy all its benefits being a member of SRC", while a banner by the Current Affairs Society read: "How well do you know about current affairs? Very well? Moderate Well?"

Dr Seet said the latter was an example of "those who lack precision and concision in English" as "about" was unnecessary. Moderate should also have been used as an adverb to modify the adjective "well".

At NUS, a poster made by undergraduates had a couple of slip-ups including a careless

reversal of words - "take rare this opportunity", rather than "take this rare opportunity". Dr Seet said the mistake was "very likely a typographical error".

He said: "Most of our undergraduates can write competently, but sometimes they use more words than necessary or they use the wrong words."

While Singaporeans seemed more forgiving of errors made in public places, more than half of those interviewed felt schools should set higher standards and do more rigorous checks.

Said housewife Josephine Leow, 44: "Grammatical errors reflect badly on a school, whether or not they are due to carelessness."

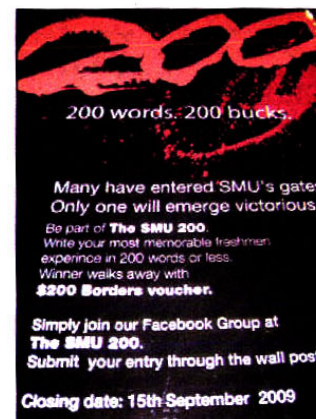
Meanwhile, the institutions are doing their part to reduce grammatical errors. SMU said it would remind its clubs to be vigilant with printed material, while NTU will compile regularly a list of common grammatical mistakes for students' reference.

siwan@sph.com.sg



■ **Seen at NTU (above):** An example of writing that lacks precision and concision and uses more words than necessary. The preposition "about" is not essential. "Moderate" should have been used as the adverb, "Moderately", to modify the adjective "well".

Dr K.K. Seet is a theatre studies lecturer from the National University of Singapore. The effectively bilingual Singaporean has served as a chairman and judge on several English language literary committees, and is author of 10 books.



■ **Seen at SMU (above):** The word "experince" is wrongly spelt and should be "experience".

"Freshmen" should be used in the singular "freshman" as it is one person's experience, says Dr Seet.