

Headline	Good diction? It's as easy as BBC		
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Description:	Mr Raymon Huang and his family recognize the importance of communicating effectively with good English.		



Good diction? It's as easy as BBC

When Mr Raymon Huang first came to Singapore from Indonesia in 1937, he could not speak a word of English.

But, spurred by the belief that clear communication is all important, he read voraciously and listened religiously to the BBC.

Mr Huang went on to become a teacher of English, history and geography at Rangoon Road Primary School.

Now 83, and a retiree, he has been passing on his excellent command of English to his four children and 11 grandchildren.

"Although I was taught by local teachers, it was the colonial era, and they had very good English and clear pronunciation," he said, explaining his own crisp diction.

"I told my children to listen to

the BBC at least once a day and asked them to make reading a habit so that they would learn good English," he added.

His daughter, academic Shirlena Huang, who is in her early 50s, also picked up good English.

"My father would play Scrabble and games like Word Power with us, and we all read constantly," said Dr Huang.

Her teenage son, Tan Kian Yang, 17, and her niece, Abigail Huang, 21, both learnt the importance of English from their parents.

Said Kian Yang: "When we were little, my mother fined us each time we used Singlish. To this day, every time there is a family gathering, we are corrected instantly by aunts and uncles if we make mistakes."

Still, the "third generation" does occasionally lapse into Singlish.

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"I told my children to listen to the BBC at least once a day and asked them to make reading a habit so that they would learn good English."

MR RAYMON HUANG

While Mr Huang says his grandchildren speak "acceptably good" English, he notices that today's younger generation often uses poor English.

Kian Yang said: "We do use expressions like 'lah' and 'lor'. I don't think our English is as good as our grandfather's. He speaks it well so effortlessly."

He said: "I think Singlish is great and there's a place for it, but many young people today are careless with their grammar and diction. It is not helped by the fact that they use shortcuts on the Internet and in text messages."

Shull Sudderuddin

Mr Raymon Huang, his daughter Shirlena and grandchildren Kian Yang and Abigail all know the importance of speaking good English. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

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