



Immediate Release

Using Standard English Is The Way To Be Understood, Emphasises Speak Good English Movement 2006

18 July 2006 – Guided by this year's tagline, "*Be Understood. Not only in Singapore, Malaysia and Batam.*" the *Speak Good English Movement 2006* is urging Singaporeans to make a conscious effort to read, listen to, write and speak Standard English that is understood not just locally, but internationally. Into its sixth year, the *Speak Good English Movement* is emphasising the role everyone can play in making a conscious choice to use Standard English at home, in offices, at school or with friends. The difference between Standard and Non-standard English will be highlighted in an entertaining way with talks, programmes, activities and games.

"Speaking Standard English and being understood, is not about accent or eliminating the "lah"s and "leh"s in our speech. It is about following the basic grammatical rules, syntax, pronunciation, and so on, of International Standard English," said Professor Koh Tai Ann, Chairman of the Speak Good English Movement. She notes that *"To encourage as many Singaporeans as possible to acquire proficiency in Standard English, we need an environment that will support the speaking and writing of good English."*

She adds that *"It is in the self-interest of as many Singaporeans as possible, in an increasingly competitive marketplace, to be able to speak and write Standard English. With other Asian countries fast acquiring proficiency in English, Singapore could lose its competitive edge, particularly in the fast-growing service industry, if we cannot make ourselves understood among other users of English."*



The objectives of this year's Movement are to raise awareness of what Standard English is and to encourage Singaporeans to consciously choose and use it in their daily lives. The use of Non-standard English is widespread and can be found on television, in schools, homes and at workplaces. Recently, over 220 Singapore Polytechnic students observed 3,315 randomly selected people whom they perceived to be "speaking English" to establish how pervasive the use of Non-standard English was. The quick observation study showed that 6 out of 10 of this group of "English speakers" spoke Non-Standard English. This is a serious problem for Singapore. In support of the importance for Singaporeans to speak good English, Singapore Polytechnic's School of Business will partner the Speak Good English Movement in conducting more in-depth studies at a later stage.

The media has pointed out how Singapore Idol contestants become unintelligible as a result of their pronunciation of lyrics like "Nong nong ago". Whether on a bus, in a food centre or at school and at office, Non-standard English sentences like "Later go where?" or "This bus got go Jurong or not?" have become the local standard. When commonly used, such Non-standard English influences and confuses young learners of English, thereby interfering with their learning of Standard English.

The tagline, *"Be Understood. Not only in Singapore, Malaysia and Batam."*, was conceptualised by the Movement's resource panel to underline the need to be globally understood.

The *Speak Good English Movement* Partners play a critical role by providing resources and programmes to all Singaporeans that can help them listen to, speak and write Standard English. Students, parents and teachers, as well as employers and employees can participate in a range of partner-led activities to improve their English. For regular updates, please visit www.goodenglish.org.sg.

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About the Speak Good English Movement

The Speak Good English Movement was established to encourage Singaporeans to speak Standard English. This means using grammatically correct English in conversations where rules for constructing sentences are adhered to. It is not about accent, although the pronunciation should be accurate. More information can be found on www.goodenglish.org.sg