



SPEECH BY PROFESSOR KOH TAI ANN, CHAIRPERSON, SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH MOVEMENT COMMITTEE AT THE OFFICAL LAUNCH OF THE SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH MOVEMENT (SGEM) 2007 ON 31 JULY 2007, 6.00 PM AT TIMBRE MUSIC BISTRO

Minister of State for Education, Lui Tuck Yew,

Mr Hri Kumar Nair, Member of Parliament, Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC

Dr Lam Pin Min, Member of Parliament, Ang Mo Kio GRC

Mrs Josephine Teo, Member of Parliament, Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC

Mr Zaqy Mohamad, Member of Parliament, Hong Kah GRC

Dr N Varaprasad, Chief Executive, National Library Board,

Fellow Members of the Speak Good English Movement Steering Committee

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Good evening and a very warm welcome to the 2007 official launch of the Speak Good English Movement. It's been seven years since the first official launch of the Movement, and almost three years since I've been roped in to serve as Chairperson. Our mission to promote the speaking of "good" English has not changed.

2. But in light of developments in linguistics, we have supplemented (not replaced) the layman's use of the nebulous term, "*good*" English with Singapore Standard English. Like other varieties of standard English such as those from UK, the USA and India, Singapore Standard English is spoken in a local accent and contains accepted words

and local concepts. But universally, the written form still provides the implicit “standard” for spoken English in all these countries, including Singapore.

3. This year, we are taking our mission to our youth. Although we will continue to bring our message to “Speak Good English” to our usual important target groups – parents, teachers and frontline staff, our youth are our future. That future includes the imperative to be effectively bilingual, English being their other language.

4. We also want to show people that Singapore Standard English can be used not only functionally in education, in government and in business, but also as a creative medium for entertainment and self-expression.

5. So this year, we are bringing the Movement into the realm of performance arts and music. Thus for the young (and the young at heart), there will be live band performances and oratorical contests under the title, *The Art of Persuasion*. Students from the NUS Theatre Studies programme and Hwa Chong Institution will be involved.

6. For the general public, including front line staff and youth, we will be launching two books today. The first is a compilation of selected items from our regular *English as It Is Broken* column in *The Sunday Times and STOMP!*. It addresses with wit and humour queries on the correct use of English. Pan Pacific Education and The Straits



Times have kindly agreed to donate a part of the proceeds to the ST School Pocket Money Fund.

7. The other book to be launched today is *Speak Well, Sell Well: A Retailer's Guide to Good English*. The Workforce Development Agency has put this together with our support to help retail staff in Singapore use standard English phrases for effective communication. It serves as a self-learning guide for retail staff, as reference material for sales supervisors and managers, and a resource for sales trainers.

8. The development of our Movement and implementation of our programmes would not have been possible without our partners. I wish to thank the Ministry of Education, the National Institute of Education, the National Library Board, the Workforce Development Agency, the Singapore Retailers Association, ComfortDelGro, SMRT Corporation, *The Straits Times*, STOMP!, MediaCorp Radio 938LIVE, 987FM (our Official Radio Station), Pan Pacific Education, Timbre and other supporting partners, too many to name here.

9. I also want to thank the Speak Good English Movement Steering Committee and Resource Panel for their ideas, hard work and generous contributions over the last seven years.



10. In conclusion, please enjoy your evening with us. Do help us to pass the message around -- that speaking Singapore Standard English can be fun and can be part of our lives and identity.

Thank you.