



SPEECH BY MR GOH ECK KHENG, CHAIRMAN, SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH MOVEMENT, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH MOVEMENT 2012, ON THURSDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2012, 3PM AT FOOD FOR THOUGHT, SINGAPORE BOTANIC GARDENS

Dr Yaacob Ibrahim

Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts

Committee Members and partners of the Speak Good English Movement

Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome to the launch of this year's Speak Good English Movement.

Our tag line for the year is "Make Good English Stick".

We want to spread the message that good English should be part and parcel of our everyday life.

We want to especially to encourage those who are weak in the English language to take steps to improve. I suggest three ways to do this.

First, read. By reading, we can learn sentence structures and different ways of sending ideas. We can also widen our vocabulary by using the dictionary when we come across words we do not understand. Many of us skim for content when we read. I suggest that we slow down and read every word so that we can appreciate the way the writer expresses himself. Reading aloud will help you discover how words are stressed in effective communication.



Reading is especially important to children as they build the foundations of good English. When my children were small, we read to them every evening as part of their bedtime ritual. In this way, we helped them to love reading and books. This activity is especially important in families where spoken English is not strong. By sharing well-written storybooks, both parents and children will improve their English. To tell a story effectively, one must practice and rehearse. Read the story aloud. Make sure you emphasize dramatic parts and stress key words. Highlight the feelings in the story.

Even well-known nursery rhymes can be read dramatically:

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall

All the king's horse and all the king's men

Couldn't put Humpty together again.

The second thing we can do to improve our English is to listen. By consciously listening to those who speak well, we can mimic the way they speak. This is how children learn English. They listen and follow what they hear. That is why we must speak grammatical English to all children. For adults, we can be inspired by those who speak well. Log on to Youtube and listen to Aung San Suu Kyi and Prof Tommy Koh. They communicate effectively not only because they have a strong grasp of the English language, but also because they speak very well. Listening to the news on TV and radio every day, and mimicking the way the broadcasters speak will help you express yourself better.



The third thing we can do to improve our English is to speak. Here are some strategies:

Make a conscious effort to speak in grammatical English.

Speak in your natural accent.

Speak in full sentences.

Think before you speak. Take time to form your idea into a sentence before saying it.

Speak slowly.

Take every opportunity to speak with those who speak English well. Listen to them and mimic them.

Speak Standard English with friends, family and colleagues, especially children – even in informal settings.

Practice, practice, practice. Make an effort to start. Stretch yourself. Don't underestimate your power.

You can Make Good English Stick.

Finally, I wish to thank the partners of the Speak Good English Movement and all those who have joined us to promote the use of Standard English. Together, we can create an environment where good English is used naturally and effectively in Singapore.

Thank you.