



**EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY
PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

SPEECH BY MR GOH ECK KHENG, CHAIRMAN OF THE SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH MOVEMENT AT THE LAUNCH OF THE SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH MOVEMENT 2013, ON WEDNESDAY 15 MAY 2013, AT 3 PM AT TOA PAYOH HDB HUB

Mr Lawrence Wong, Acting Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, and

Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Communications and Information

Mrs Rosa Daniel, CEO, National Heritage Board

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon.

Let's consider a simple English word: Mug.

It has just three letters. A young child can read it easily and he or she can probably spell it too. But this simple word has many meanings.

Here's one. A mug is a cylindrical drinking cup usually with a handle, like this.

It also means the amount that such a cup can hold: a mug of tea.

Informally, it could mean the human face, the area of the mouth, chin and jaw, to make exaggerated facial expressions especially for humorous effect, a grimace, to threaten or assault someone with the intent to rob, a thug or hooligan, and a photograph of such a person's face for police files. And of course in Singapore we mug up for exams.

What a rich language English is.

Let me return to the mug as a cup. This year, the Speak Good English Movement is sharing 10 tips on how we can improve our English by printing them on 50,000 mugs. These mugs are being distributed free-of-charge for use in hawker centres, coffee shops and other F&B outlets across the island. A big thank you to NEA for making introductions to hawker centre operators, and the Singapore Coffee Association and the Indian Restaurants Association for helping us reach coffee shop owners and Indian restaurants respectively. We also thank other partners for agreeing to use these mugs so that the tips will be shared with an even wider range of Singaporeans. These comprise social enterprises: Professor Brawn Café, Dignity Kitchen and Joan Bowen Café; popular chains: Toast Box, Ya Kun, Kopitiam and Gayatri; independent cafes: SOHO Coffee, Group Therapy, Shots Café, 7KICKstart BREWiches, L'etoile, ReStore, The Orange Thimble and Yahava Koffee; and also specialty restaurants: Old School Delights, The Muffinry and Strictly Pancakes. Last but not least, we thank Puro Coffee Singapore for sponsoring the coffee for the media invitations and our coffee corner today.

This year, we especially want to reach working adults with our message. English is the language of business in Singapore and we want to ask every working person to consider if they use English effectively at work.

To do this, we have partnered the British Council to set an English assessment test aimed primarily at office workers. Which is correct? Would you say: The presentation must be ready by Tuesday, the presentation how to be ready by Tuesday, or the presentation got ready by Tuesday? What about: the deadline is 15 September, the dateline is 15 September, or the deadline is 15 September?

We believe that better English will result in better business returns by way of effective communication both among colleagues as well as with clients. This is true for law firms, boutiques, restaurants, clinics, and the whole range of businesses. The level of English proficiency of the receptionist, the junior executive to the CEO gives either a good or bad impression of the company and affects its performance and bottom line.

We therefore invite corporations large and small to think about how they can improve the standard of English in their offices and businesses. Use the 10 tips as a catalyst, and think of other strategies and implement them in your work place. What about sending grammar tips or pointing out common mistakes via email to your staff on a regular basis? Could you circulate a list of commonly misspelt words?

Awareness must be followed by action, and action will make a real difference. Let's work together to improve the standard of English in Singapore. Will you drink to that?

Thank you.