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Crux of English debate

CHARMED by the British accents of the Singaporean cast in *The Dresser*, Ms Stella Kon (ST, July 15) says that 'Anyone who thinks that good English is out of the reach of Singaporeans should see this production'. But her claim that the proud standard of our actors makes 'the debate about native English speakers seem rather pointless' misses the point.

The point is not that Singaporeans are incapable of speaking 'good English'. Rather, the fact that we can but do not or do not wish to remains the crux of the issue.

As research has shown, Singaporeans who are able to code-switch effectively between Standard English and Singlish belong to the minority. In an age of post-colonial sensibilities, a non-native speaker's ability to affect a British accent need not be greeted with such uncritical admiration.

Warren Mark Liew