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S'porean accent makes us unique, not Singlish

I AM all for the speak-proper-English campaign. Many who have lived abroad may share the same experience: we can recognise a Singaporean right away in a foreign land from the way he or she speaks. This is so even if he or she speaks proper English.

The Singaporean accent is unique. It is due to the intonation peculiar to Singaporeans. Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew is the classic example of the Singaporean accent. He is clear, crisp and highly effective in his delivery. He does not speak with a British accent.

Our brand of English, when spoken properly, does not sound like anyone else's. I kept the Singaporean accent when I worked in an 'ang moh' setting in Hong Kong. I am proud of it.

However, I cannot say that I will readily associate myself with someone speaking Singlish in, say, Hong Kong. The way I see it, Singlish (as is generally understood) is basically broken English or English translated word for word from, say, Chinese (or some other native language), such as: 'you got go or not?' (which is basically 'ni you mei you qu?').

Singaporean professionals are in high demand for their language skills and the Government is right to use this campaign as a reminder to speak proper English. I wish more could be done to correct the appalling standard of English of our youths.

There may be other arguments for Singlish but some of us are missing the point if they think that speaking broken English equates to having a Singaporean identity.

Chow Kin Wah