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## **Speak good English campaign should be aimed at less educated and youths**

Almost half a century has passed since Singapore embraced the English language. To the rest of the world, Singapore has come a long way, with a stable English-speaking government backed by an English-speaking workforce.

This impression boils down to the general trend that only middle and upper class Singaporeans have a good command of the language. As a Singaporean in mainstream society, the inherent flaws in the system become very obvious.

The Speak Good English movement aims to address these flaws, but it is reaching out to the wrong audience. It promotes its message on radio and television, mediums that may not be available to the lower classes.

Schools and teachers reach out to their students but the less educated do not benefit from this.

What is the point of such a movement if it only targets individuals who already have a decent command of the English language?

One such problem lies with workers in the service sector. The recent drive by the government to promote better service is a commendable effort. Yet it fails to address other key issues, such as poor command of the English language.

No matter what standard of service such staff can provide, foreign visitors and tourists would still be put off by poor grammar and colloquial language.

A likely explanation is that workers in the service sector are more often than not the less educated. Thus a two-pronged approach should be adopted to promote better service as well as good English.

Another worrying trend is the rapidly declining standard of English among our youths. The use of colloquial speech in daily conversations is a common sight and this problem is being compounded by the advent of IM and SMS language.

The problem is evident almost everywhere as teens can be heard conversing freely in Singlish, often peppered with Chinese or Malay vocabulary.

If the Speak Good English movement is to reach out to students, they clearly are not paying heed. A possible solution would be to promote good English as "cool" and "hip" through activities that engage the youths of Singapore. This would influence youths far better than the current approach.

Thus the government should continue the Speak Good English movement but tailor it to cater to all levels of society, especially the less educated and the younger generation.

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