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## Get it right. It's wrong to say Singlish comprises 'four national languages'

I refer to the letter "Singlish is part of our culture, an infusion of all things Singaporean" (ST Online Forum, Aug 12) by Neo Yue Zheng.

Mr Neo is wrong to say "Singlish incorporates elements from the four national languages".

I would highlight to him that there is only one national language in Singapore and that is Malay, in which the national anthem is sung.

English, on the other hand, is the language of administration whilst the four official languages are English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. It is discomfiting that Mr Neo got his facts jumbled up.

It is also erroneous to say that Singlish is a culture in Singapore, an infusion of all things Singaporean. Singlish, too, is the "lingua franca" of those who are unable to converse in simple English that can be understood by other nationalities.

The use of Singlish over a long period would only serve to blunt the Republic's competitiveness in the global market.

How would jobs be created for Singaporeans if Singlish or "bad, poorly-spoken English" is allowed to fester in the Republic, to the bewilderment of international visitors and investors?

It is also wrong to state that "Singlish, in a way, is our national language." The national language of Singapore, Malay, is a living language of the Malay archipelago where the Republic is located. About 200 million people in this region speak it.

Knowing Malay is advantageous to foster understanding of the culture and traditions of Malays in this region.

Attesting to this fact is our beloved Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew, who stressed that non-Malays understand the importance of Malay in 2004 after noting that some Singaporeans in the tsunami rescue efforts in Aceh had difficulty understanding the debriefing conducted in Bahasa Indonesia by Indonesian military commanders.

I am flabbergasted that Mr Neo says "it is when they start to speak Singlish that they truly become Singapore citizens".

I agree with Minister of State for Education, RADM Lui Tuck Yew's insights in The Sunday Times, "What if we're understood only in S'pore, Malaysia and Batam?" (Aug 6), and I quote him, "that contractors are also fighting for jobs internationally. If you speak like Phua Chu Kang, you are not going to get deals - and they are not laughing with you. They are laughing at you."

Without a doubt, the crisis of Singlish or poorly-spoken English must be looked into.

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