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Perils of Singlish: Not many can switch from poor to good English easily

The letter "Singlish is part of our culture, an infusion of all things Singaporean" (ST Online Forum, Aug 12) lauds its uniqueness.

I've just returned from Malaysia and noticed that the people there still speak English "Singlishly" despite 41 years of separation. So who invented the Straits English that we call Singlish?

Singlish is like the extra wheels on a child's bike upon which less literate Singaporeans rely on to communicate. But most of us have outgrown the props to handle English skilfully.

Still, don't ban the patois that some people need, although the extra wheels can become a hinderance to progress. Great poetry, songs, literature and academic treatises cannot be written in Singlish.

The writer asserts there's a "correct time and place" for speaking English or Singlish. But as only a minority can change gear without corrupting their spoken and written English, how does he plan to curb the toll Singlish habits take on our professionalism and image?

How many of the region's workers and students here have imbibed the Singlish that they unknowingly propagate when they go home?

Anthony Lee Mui Yu

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