



**EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY
PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

SPEECH BY MR GOH ECK KHENG, CHAIRMAN OF THE SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH MOVEMENT AT THE LAUNCH OF THE SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH MOVEMENT 2014, AT 3.30PM ON WEDNESDAY 28 MAY 2014, AT THE ARTS HOUSE.

Ladies and gentleman, we have no guest-of-honour for this year's launch of the Speak Good English Movement. No, we have not been stood up. We did not invite one.

This is because we want Grammar to take centre stage. Today, grammar rules.

For all the years of the movement, we have encouraged Singaporeans to speak 'good English', 'Standard English', and 'English that is used and understood around the world'.

This year, we feel that it is time to say that this English that we are promoting is also grammatical English.

Grammar provides structure to the English language. It comes in the form of rules. And since we Singaporeans are so good at following rules, we think that it will work.

But seriously, Singaporeans are particularly weak in tenses, subject-verb agreement and prepositions. We also use the syntax of other languages for English, thus fracturing it.

For those of us who are strong in English, grammar is not something we often think about. It is ingrained in the way we speak and write. However, for those who are weak in English, going back to the basics of grammar will help them improve.

To this end, the two sets of notebooks we are giving away this year focus on grammar rules and correct common grammar and syntax mistakes. The editors of *The Straits Times* have specially produced one set based on their writing tips and the common mistakes they have observed. Newspaper editors regularly work to tight schedules, but they do not compromise on good writing because of deadlines. I thank Warren Fernandez, Editor of *The Straits Times*, and his team for contributing to the Speak Good English Movement. Their set of notebooks will be a very helpful resource for everyone.

We also have a funny short story purposely riddled with grammar mistakes to help us rate our standard of English. See how many mistakes you can spot.

Another way to learn grammar and to improve one's English is to consciously listen to those who speak English well. So, when we speak grammatical English, we are giving those who listen to us the opportunity to mimic and improve. The more we use grammatical English, the more we contribute to the environment of good English in Singapore.

A growing list of organisations partner the Speak Good English Movement in our mission every year. Let me recognise them:

The Straits Times and Student Newspapers

MediaCorp

The Arts House

Ministry of Education and English Language Institute of Singapore

ComfortDelgro

Singapore Hotel Association

National Library Board

Ascend, The English Professionals

Language Works

Quantico Communications

British Council

The English Channel

Jan & Elly English Language School

The Theatre Practice

Emergenetics International – Asia

ReallyEnglish

Republic Polytechnic

YMCA

National Heritage Board

61 Stamford Road #03-08 Stamford Court Singapore 178892

Hotline: 1800-CALL-NHB / 1800-2255-642 Fax: +65 6332 4568 Email: nhb_speakgoodenglishmovement@nhb.gov.sg

In particular, I wish to thank ITE (the Institute of Technical Education) and their enthusiastic students who will be taking to the streets to distribute our collaterals and spread our message.

They will be performing synchronised walking at Ngee Ann City Walkway, Plaza Singapura, Junction 8 and Westgate on Saturday, 31 May, from 3 pm to 4 pm. Do encourage them if you see them.

Dream Academy, Selena Tan, and Benjamin Lee (better known as Mr Miyagi) have created a series of hilarious skits based on the importance of grammar for us. These will be performed shortly by Kumar, The Drama Queen (pardon me - I mean Grammar Queen).

The videos of these six skits will be uploaded on social media -- one video a week from today. Find them on our Facebook page and YouTube channels and share them with all your friends.

Remember, the Speak Good English Movement is not a campaign but a movement. We will be stuck in a rut without you.

We thank you for your continued active support.