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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SINGAPOREANS WANT TO SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH TO BE BETTER UNDERSTOOD

Key message – I can

The Speak Good English Movement wants to motivate and inspire Singaporeans to choose to speak good English and take action to further improve their English.

This year's key message is simply - "**I can**". Said Minister Lim Boon Heng: "There are times when Singaporeans complain, but if we stop to take stock of our achievements, all that we have accomplished in the short time we have been a nation, we should look back and say that nothing is impossible. So yes, I can, you can and we can, speak and use good English, as individuals and as a nation."

Survey on speaking good English

At the official launch of the Speak Good English Movement 2008, Minister Lim unveiled the results of a survey on speaking good English.

The survey was conducted by the Singapore Polytechnic School of Business in November 2007, in support of the Movement. More than 1,200 Singaporeans aged 15-39 years were interviewed face-to-face on the streets, near shopping malls, supermarkets and MRT stations. Half of the interviews took place in the Central Business District and the other half was spread across Singapore.

The objective of the survey was to find out the perceptions and level of awareness of the Speak Good English Movement so that we can be more effective in reaching out to more Singaporeans. The survey also asked respondents about their perceptions and attitudes to speaking good English, and the barriers and opportunities to do so.

Key findings

Perceptions and attitudes to speaking good English

Everyone surveyed agreed that speaking good English gives Singapore a competitive edge. When they were asked to rate themselves, 66% said that they are speaking better English compared to two years ago. The main motivations for speaking good English were **to express themselves better** and **to be better understood by others**. Respondents said they make an effort to speak good English always or most of the time when conversing with superiors and clients, customers or business associates. The spoken English of service staff was given the lowest ratings by all respondents.

Barriers to speaking good English

The top 3 factors preventing respondents from speaking good English are: their non-English speaking environment; family, friends and colleagues do not speak good English; and their own poor command of English.

Opportunities for improving English

Most respondents surveyed said that attending courses and workshops / talks / seminars were encouraging activities for learning and speaking English.

The top 3 leisure activities that would encourage people to learn and speak good English are reading, watching television / videos and listening to the radio.

Awareness of the Speak Good English Movement

60% of people interviewed said they were aware of the Speak Good English Movement. More importantly, all who were aware of the Movement said that it has increased their awareness of the importance of speaking good English and that it had encouraged them to speak good English.

The findings of the survey will guide the Movement in planning its future campaigns and programmes to reach out to its target audiences, and in deciding which medium to use and the kinds of programmes that would have wide appeal.



Focus on service and retail staff

This year, the Speak Good English Movement is working with the *Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA)* to encourage and help service and retail staff to speak better English. *METRO* and *TANGS* are two retailers who are sending their staff to the WDA's Workplace Literacy programme. The *Singapore Retailers Association*, a partner of the Movement, is also launching a new training programme called "Service English for Retail Professionals" to raise the level of spoken English among retail staff.

Launch of *English As It Is Broken 2*

The Movement also launched *English As It Is Broken 2*, a book with useful tips on the correct usage of the English language. The first book was very well-received; 26,000 copies of *English As It Is Broken 1* were sold and it remained on *The Straits Times* non-fiction best-sellers list for 10 months. This shows the great interest people have in learning and improving their English.

English As It Is Broken 2, is priced at \$7.50 (before GST), and will be available at major bookstores from today. The book is a collaboration between *STOMP*, *Panpac Education* and the Speak Good English Movement.

Partner programmes

The Speak Good English Movement and its partners have lined up a series of programmes to help people learn to speak good English in fun and interesting ways. For more details visit www.goodenglish.org.sg

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