

WELCOME ADDRESS BY GOH ECK KHENG, CHAIRMAN OF THE SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH MOVEMENT AT THE INAUGURAL INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH AWARDS PRESENTATION CEREMONY ON WEDNESDAY, 29 OCT 2008, 7.10 PM AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD, 100 Victoria Street Singapore 188064

Minister of State for Education, Rear Admiral (NS) Lui Tuck Yew, principals, teachers, and friends.

Thank you for coming to the inaugural Inspiring Teacher of English Awards presentation ceremony.

This award is not just about celebrating the winners. It is also about celebrating and acknowledging all English language and literature teachers who inspire their students to use good English. I'd like to add that we are here as well to celebrate teachers of other subjects – and principals – who likewise set examples to students by speaking good English.

I attended Anglo-Chinese Junior School and Anglo-Chinese School, and I cannot recall any teacher who did not speak impeccable English in and out of the classroom. Subconsciously, we modeled the way we spoke after what we heard, and had the confidence to use puns, metaphors and other figures of speech in our banter.

I figure that at least one teacher thought that we had become too big for our boots. At the start of our first 'A' level General Paper class, Mr Ong Kim Kiat, who incidentally co-authored two English language textbooks, announced that he was going to give us a grammar and spelling test. The whole class rolled our eyes and sniggered. "You've got to be joking." I'd like to report that after the test, no one laughed. A very wise teacher had made an important point.

We had taken our English for granted.

Like Mr Ong, the nine award winning teachers are innovative in, and passionate about, the way they teach English. In these ways, they have been able to deepen their students' love for the language and inspire them to continue to improve their literacy.

Learning is an on-going process and we need the desire and discipline to consciously better our English at every turn, especially if we do not speak it well.

I am glad that English grammar continues to be important in Singapore's school curriculum. I believe that the teaching of grammar can be even more effective if teachers become role models to their students by speaking Standard English all the time.

One way of healing broken English is to hear good English spoken. So, let's all speak well and play our part to help others improve their English.

Thank you.