



**SPEECH BY MR S ISWARAN, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF TRADE & INDUSTRY AND MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AT THE THIRD INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH AWARD PRESENTATION CEREMONY ON TUESDAY, 19 OCT 2010, 6.10 PM AT THE POD, NATIONAL LIBRARY BUILDING**

Mr Goh Eck Kheng, Chairman, Speak Good English Movement,

Ms Yeoh Chee Yan, Second Permanent Secretary for Education

Ms Ho Peng, Director General of Education,

Mdm Low Khah Gek Director of Curriculum Planning and Development

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Principals, Teachers, and Students

Good evening,

1. I am pleased to once again be a part of this special event which honours Teachers of English who have been outstanding in their efforts to motivate and inspire students.

2. The central role of English in the modern world is, by now, well-known and acknowledged. English is the common language of the diverse communities in Singapore. English is also the principal channel through which we interact with

the world. In the global marketplace, the ability to be concise and precise in communication is key to competitiveness. That ability is vital not only to Singapore as a nation, but also important to individual Singaporeans.

3. The need to communicate accurately, persuasively and with clarity also straddles vocations and professions. The consequences of poor communication between a taxi driver and commuter can be quite adventurous. Equally, we need sales representatives, financiers and legal consultants who can function effectively in an international environment dealing with a multicultural clientele.

4. This need for simple, accurate and effective English lies at the heart of the Speak Good English Movement's Tagline for this year, "Get It Right". It is a reminder to all of us to use English correctly – always and every time. The Speak Good English Movement has even produced "Get It Right" sticky notes to enable everyone to get involved in highlighting the correct use of English in a friendly and supportive manner.

5. In essence, the tag-line and the sticky notes are really about increasing awareness, which is an important first step. One cannot improve without knowing whether and where there might be a shortcoming. Yet such awareness should be raised in a supportive and collegiate manner if it is to be constructive and elicit cooperative outcomes. Those who claim complete mastery of English would be

in a minority of one. We can all improve - just as we can all help others to improve.

6. This leads me to our Inspiring English Teachers. If school is the theatre where we imbibe a profound appreciation of English, then the teacher must surely be the playwright cum director. Outstanding English teachers don't just impart proficiency in the language to their students; they also imbue them with a natural and lifelong affection for the language and a commitment to its proper, if not elegant, use. . A teacher who leaves his/her students with such a lasting awareness and determination is truly inspirational. Let me tell you a little about three of tonight's awardees.

7. Ms Lajwanti Melwani from White Sands Primary School believes in using books such as To Kill A Mocking Bird by Harper Lee, Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen, A Passage to India by EM Forster and The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini, amongst others, to encourage vocabulary building and imaginative thinking. She inspires her students to read widely to expand their knowledge across a wide range of genres. In the process of preparing English Language lessons for her students, she has sought to improve her own English and knowledge too. She believes that the desire to learn and improve must stay with us right through our lives.

8. The students of Mr William Grosse, at Rosyth School learn to use language through debates, forums and reading. Mr Grosse readily lends his students books such as Call it Courage by Armstrong Sperry, Johnathan Livingston Seagull by Richard Bach, The Wind Singer by William Nicholson and The Giver by Lois Lowry from his own personal library. To encourage his students to think and speak out, he creates a safe environment in class, and reminds them that “the teacher may not always have the answer”. Mr Grosse constantly seeks out new teaching methods to ensure that his students enjoy learning and keep improving.

9. Ms Angela Quek from Tampines Junior College believes learning can occur everywhere and wants her students to experience English in different contexts. She provides them readings from novels, journals and reputable online sources on a wide range of themes and issues and encourages every student to express a personal viewpoint and to evaluate the views of others. Ms Quek seeks to instill in each of her students the spirit of enquiry and the confidence to speak their minds.

10. The other seven awardees each have their own compelling stories. All ten awardees share a common determination to inspire their students to constantly improve their English. The ten awardees are also role models of good English for their colleagues - those who teach English and those who teach subjects in English.

11. To build a good English environment and culture for our students, MOE has implemented the 'Whole-School Approach to English Language' at 40 pilot schools, comprising a mix of primary and secondary schools and a junior college. In these schools, teachers, students and administrative staff set aside time to learn together and improve their use of English. They use a wide variety of activities and programmes and everyone, staff and students alike, is encouraged to strive continuously to improve their English and aspire towards new levels of proficiency.

12. MOE has actively engaged our partners and collaboratively developed resources to strengthen the learning of English. To instill a lifelong love for reading, MOE, together with the National Library Board, has started working with 15 pilot schools on a Whole-School Reading Programme. At Huamin Primary, one of the pilot schools, students read, swap and share their books, and a culture of reading and learning has been developed. Even parents have become involved in their reading activities.

13. Another joint effort between MOE and NLB is the production of a second edition of the "Joy of Reading", a handbook that provides information to parents on age-appropriate children's books available in the national library and tips for parents on how to build bonds with their children through reading and how to foster the reading habit from a young age. Response from parents to the first

edition has been very positive. MOE is providing a copy of the second edition for each parent of next year's Primary 1 cohort.

14. Last year, I announced that MOE would set up the English Language Institute of Singapore (ELIS) as a centre for developing the teaching of English and English proficiency to all English Language and English medium teachers. I am pleased to announce that the core team of ELIS has been formed - headed by ELIS Principal-Designate, Mrs Wai Yin Pryke, currently, Principal of St Andrew's Junior School. The team has been busy laying the foundation for the institute's services and drawing up the plans for its flagship programmes which fall into two main categories – pedagogy courses on teaching of English Language, and communication courses for English-medium teachers. The pedagogy courses will be delivered by English Master teachers and these include Teaching Oracy, Teaching Grammar, Teaching Reading, and Teaching Writing. The English Language communication courses for English-medium teachers will focus on classroom instructional language. These courses on oral and written communication will be delivered by Specialist Trainers. In addition to the delivery of its flagship programmes, ELIS also aims to build a vibrant learning community among the English Language fraternity to foster a culture of learning, exchange and collaboration.

15. ELIS will work with the Inspiring Teachers of English award winners - past and present - and partner with the Speak Good English Movement. I am sure

some exciting initiatives will develop from this collaboration, and look forward to the official launch of the English Language Institute of Singapore in June next year.

16. Today, I am very pleased to announce that MOE and NIE have been collaborating to develop a series of books on grammar and the first in the series, About Grammar – Basic, for Primary 3-4 students will be available in the bookstores next month. The next two books in the series, About Grammar – Intermediate, for Primary 5-6 students and About Grammar – Advanced, for secondary school students will be ready in June 2011 and June 2012 respectively. This series of books will help our students learn grammar in a structured and engaging way. These books are characterized by their extensive use of visuals, illustrations and simple, age-appropriate language to explain complex grammatical concepts. Examples are drawn from veryday life that students can relate to and humour is incorporated to make learning fun. The About Grammar series will be an important resource to complement the extensive reading and exposure to good English that all learners need.

17. We need all teachers and the broader community to work collectively to promote good English in our schools and in Singapore. We should also seek to emulate the Inspiring Teacher of English award winners by continuously seeking to improve our English and supporting others to do the same.

18. In conclusion, I would like to express my sincerest thanks to The Straits Times and the Speak Good English Movement for co-organizing the Inspiring Teacher of English Award. I would also like to congratulate all award winners whom I am sure will go on to inspire many future generations of students and teachers.

Thank you.