

Headline	Ways to improve English in school		
Date	1 Nov 2010		
Media Title	The Straits Times	Section	Life
Description	YouthInk writers suggest ways to inspire students, in view of the Inspiring Teacher of English Award that honours teachers for being role models of good English.		

MY LIFE

Ways to improve English in school

Last month, 10 teachers were honoured with the Inspiring Teacher of English Award for being role models of good English. But do schools offer enough good examples of how English should be used? YouthInk writers suggest ways to inspire students

Real-life situations work well

I'VE always been an enemy of grammar. I hate it. I can't even remember if my teachers taught it to me in primary school.

As far as I can remember, I've been learning English the "natural" way – by using it in everyday situations. I conversed with my parents in English; I conversed with my friends in English. That was how I grasped the English language.

If you ask me, that is exactly how young students should be taught the language – by getting them to use it in real life. Give them scenarios: chatting with friends; speaking in front of an audience; interviewing another student – practising speech and drama works wonders. It is speech practice that will help the writing. When you speak well, you also write well. It works both ways.

I'm not saying grammar's not the way to go. It does come in handy when analysing complex sentences. But expression has always been the key to languages.

Oliver Sayson, 22, is a mass communications student at the Management Development Institute of Singapore.

Stock up the best libraries

IT'S not overstating it to say that the cultural level of a town can be gauged by the existence and quality of its library. Libraries open up a world of literature to people and is absolutely essential in the learning of a language.

Unlike cooking, where eating a lot does not make one a good chef, reading a lot does teach you better English.

I was seven when I left Germany. Despite my not knowing any English, I was

thrust straight into Primary 1. I lagged behind at first, scoring a pathetic four out of 50 for my first English exam. Months later, however, I started topping the class, thanks to my school library. During recess, when other kids would go outside and play, I would read in the library.

I did not read anything of great importance. Neither did I consciously seek to improve my English. I just read comic books that interested me. While their content was juvenile, their language was grammatically correct. The books demonstrated to me the correct usage of English, and that was where I learnt my grammar.

To ensure that students receive examples of good English, we need better libraries. Schools must find out what students want and stock up their libraries accordingly.

Ethan Lou, 20, is serving his national service.

Use skits, books and films

HAVING walked the corridors of my school for the past six years, I must say that there are insufficient examples of how the English language should be used correctly. Sure, there are the odd Speak



Ms Esther Chia, of CHIJ Kellock Primary School, is one of 10 winners of the Inspiring Teacher of English Award. MY PAPER FILE PHOTO

Good English posters, but other than those, I find my school lacking in an atmosphere that promotes good use of the English language.

I think that arranging assembly programmes using good English and highlighting its importance can improve this. Skits can be performed by groups of pupils, too. Maybe the school library could arrange book exchange programmes with other schools to keep their reading material fresh.

Even good films that promote the prop-

er use of English could be screened in the libraries, with pupils writing reviews for their friends to read.

Finally, all these can be reinforced by having teachers use good English around students to instill in them a sense of importance regarding using correct English. **Nicholas Lam, 11, is a Primary 6 pupil at Rosyth School.**

Create the right environment

WHILE my friends and I do not admit to practising perfect English, we often find ourselves in stitches when we notice a grammatical error, usually overheard or spotted on a signboard.

I would like to think that this means we are proficient enough in the language after many years in school, where we had good examples to follow.

Therefore, I strongly believe that any form of English used in schools needs to be spot on. Whether they are signs and notices in canteens or motivational messages pasted on corridor walls, the physical environment is something students simply cannot avoid.

Schools could also look into having a noticeboard promoting English. The "word-of-the-day" concept could be used, complete with phonetic symbols and real-life applications. Schools can even include such words in exam papers, so pupils will pay attention.

Keith Neubronner, 21, is serving his national service.