

<b>Headline</b>	Making grammar fun for students		
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<b>Description</b>	Speaking at the Inspiring Teacher of English Award ceremony, SMS Iswaran announced that new grammar books would be introduced to those in Pri 3 to secondary school.		

# Making grammar fun for students

New books for Pri 3 and up aimed at teaching rules of English in non-threatening way

By EISEN TEO & JENNANI DURAI

SCHOOLS here are going back to teaching the rules governing the use of English. From next month until June 2012, grammar books will be introduced for those in Primary 3 to secondary schools.

These will help students learn about words, their various forms, their functions in sentences and how they relate to each other.

Those who went to school in the 1960s and 1970s will recall – perhaps with dread – the sentence-pattern drills of formal grammar they had to endure.

But Senior Minister of State for Education S. Iswaran said last night that grammar will be taught in an “engaging”, “fun and non-threatening” way.

He was speaking at the National Library, ahead of this year’s ceremony to honour 10 teachers of English with the Inspiring Teacher of English Award (ITEA).

This is the third year the awards – handed out by The Straits Times and the Speak Good English Movement, with the support of the Ministry of Education (MOE) – are being given out.

Mr Iswaran, in a speech signalling the MOE’s efforts to build a good environment and culture for the learning of English in schools, also disclosed that a “Whole-School Approach” to the English language was being tried out in 40 pilot schools.

There, teachers, students and staff set aside time to improve their English through activities and programmes.

Speaking to The Straits Times after the awards ceremony, he said this newspaper could also contribute to the learning of English by being “part of the daily reading diet of students”.

Several ITEA winners are already nudging their students in that direction by using The Straits Times in class.

For example, Madam Kamisah Yusof, 41, of Pasir Ris Crest Secondary, cuts out articles from The Straits Times once a week and gets her Secondary 4 students to write responses to them. “My students can then relate better to current affairs,”



Inspiring Teacher of English Award winner Esther Chia from CHIJ (Kellook), playing the role of “Lady Gigi”, “sister” of pop singer Lady Gaga, stages a mock press conference through which her Primary 5 pupils learn idioms and grammar. ST PHOTO: SAMUEL HE

she said.

Other ITEA winners are milking pop-culture references and using new media to engage their students.

Ngee Ann Secondary teacher Rachel Poh, 30, created an online avatar of English poet and playwright William Shakespeare, who took questions from her students through the online chat programme Microsoft Messenger.

Some of them, upon finding out through this digital chat that the Bard’s shortest play was The Comedy Of Errors, were piqued enough to go to the library to look for it, she said.

Another ITEA winner, Mrs Esther Chia, 41, from CHIJ (Kellook), dressed up as “Lady Gigi”, “sister” of pop singer Lady Gaga, and staged a mock press confer-

ence in class, through which her Primary 5 pupils learnt idioms and grammar.

She has also drawn on lyrics of songs, such as those by pop princess Britney Spears, as discussion topics or for cloze passage exercises.

Mr Iswaran praised the winners for being role models of good English, and for their efforts to inspire their students’ grasp and appreciation of the language.

Of the 10, five are from primary schools, three from secondary schools and two from junior colleges. They were picked from 67 names put up by students, parents and fellow teachers.

The nominees were interviewed and observed in the classroom by a panel of 11 judges, which included representatives from the British Council and English lan-

guage master teachers from MOE.

Panel judge Jennifer Yin, who heads the secretariat of the Speak Good English Movement, said of the 10: “Their students are the centre of everything they do...These teachers go way beyond the call of duty.”

They were each presented a certificate, a trophy and an undisclosed cash prize last night.

To showcase their achievements, The Straits Times will, for the first time, feature their classroom innovations exclusively in IN and Little Red Dot, its weekly magazines for secondary and primary schools respectively.

IN is delivered with Monday’s edition of the broadsheet to subscribing schools, and Little Red Dot, with Tuesday’s edi-

## Tips from experts on how to brighten up English lessons

LEARN from the world’s best at The Straits Times’ fifth annual Teachers Forum.

On Nov 12, educators and Straits Times section editors will offer tips on how to use the newspaper to brighten up English lessons.

Last month, The Straits Times was awarded the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers’ 2010 World Young Reader prize in the Newspapers In Education category.

This year’s forum will showcase the unique features which gave it that distinction, and show educators how they can use the broadsheet as a learning resource that can be used to prepare pupils and students for examinations.

The half-day workshop – which is free for all teachers and heads of departments – includes talks by desk editors, a panel discussion led by curriculum specialists from the Ministry of Education and break-out sessions led by Newspapers In Education experts.

It is open to all educators from primary and secondary schools, and will be held at the auditorium of the Singapore Press Holdings News Centre in 1000 Toa Payoh North.

All participants will be entitled to lunch and a tour of The Straits Times newsroom. School representatives may sign up with Mr David Tan by calling 6319-1005, or sending an e-mail to [davtan@sph.com.sg](mailto:davtan@sph.com.sg)

tion. Both feature ready-made English lessons that cover, for example, phonetics and grammar exercises.

The winners will be invited to the upcoming The Straits Times’ Teachers Forum on Nov 12.

To subscribe to The Straits Times and its schools publications IN and Little Red Dot, call Mr David Tan on 6319-1005, or e-mail [circschool@sph.com.sg](mailto:circschool@sph.com.sg)

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