

JANUARY 2009/ISSUE 20

## FULL TRANSITION TO ENGLISH – ARE YOU READY?

By the start of the January 2009 semester, OUM will have moved fully into using English as the main language of instruction and for all learning materials. The necessity and benefits of this move are self-evident. The move repositions OUM as a global higher education provider. And it ensures that OUM graduates are equipped with the necessary language skills to compete in the demanding job market. As with any change, there will be some resistance. This issue explores the changing scenario and the issues it throws up.

### REGULARS

- Editor's Note ... p.2
- Letters to the Editor ... p.3
- Tutor Reminder ... p. 4
- From the Dean's Office ... p. 6
- Tutor Opinion ... p.10
- Effective Tutoring ... p.14
- Motivation ... p.15

### FEATURES

- A step in the right direction ... p.5
- Raising the bar for our grads ... p.7
- Enhancing English language literacy in Southeast Asia ... p.8
- Tutor responses to English ... p.11
- Learner viewpoints ... p.13



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## ABOUT TCX

TCX (Tutor Connexions) is an OUM e-newsletter that provides a dedicated link between the University and its tutors. It serves as a channel for news and updates on tutor-related events and as a platform for the sharing of views, experiences and tips on best practices in university teaching and learning.

TCX is published electronically five times a year (twice in the January and September semesters, and once in the May semester).

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

What do you see when you view the picture on this issue's cover page? An old peeling wall panel on which sits a picture on a frame?

What if someone were to say to you that the object hanging on the wall is not a static picture but is in fact a looking mirror reflecting the breathtaking scenery outside?

Like the moral of the cover picture, this issue is about the importance of not losing sight of the fundamentals where the use of language in education is concerned.

Proverbially speaking, we can sit in the room and insist that the object hanging on the wall is a static picture, just as we can choose to ignore English as a global language.

Or we can choose to get up, step out and discover the beautiful outside; which is the equivalent of saying that we can choose to master (rather than dismiss) English, which to me seems like an infinitely more fruitful thing to do.

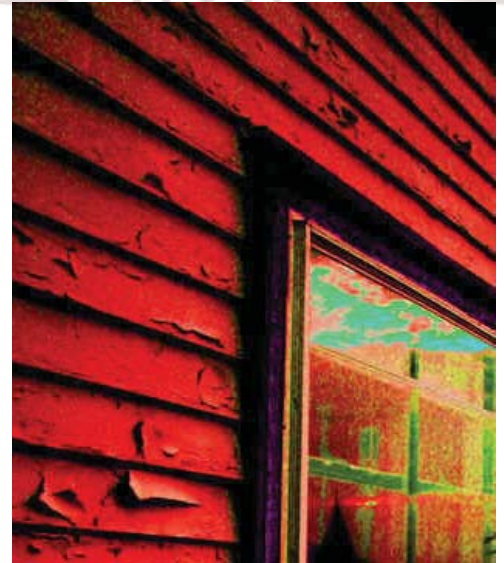
We hope the features in this issue will serve as food for thought for all OUM tutors at the frontline implementing the transition to English.

Write to us if you would like to share constructive perspectives on the views offered. Last but not least, we would like to wish you a productive new year.

Best

Dr David C. L. Lim

Chief Editor





I hope that OUM will take a similar initiative for our students' benefit. Currently, our students have to rely on their tutors for sample topics, which are very limited.

Another major problem is going to schools to carry out school-based research. The school authorities do not allow the students to enter the school without a letter of permission from the state education department and the department insists on a letter from the Educational Planning and Research Development Unit.

Unfortunately, it is difficult for students to obtain this letter, known as the EPRD letter. Please take action on these two problems. I really appreciate it.

### CHALLENGES IN DOING SCHOOL-BASED RESEARCH

While monitoring my students in doing the parts 1 and 2 of their school-based research, I realised some of the main problems encountered by our adult learners. Firstly, their sources of reference are very limited, as the learning centres do not provide the work done by their seniors as a guideline.

This could help the students to find interesting topics for their thesis and to improvise on what have been done by their seniors.

*Zurainee Ariffin*

Kelantan Learning Centre

**We welcome letters from our readers on any issue that may be of concern to you. You may use a pseudonym if you wish but please mention which learning centre you are from.**

**Please e-mail us at [tcx@oum.edu.my](mailto:tcx@oum.edu.my).**

### ONLINE POLL

In order for learners to get the most from learning in English, tutors must:

1. Be able conduct lessons in English and Bahasa Malaysia
2. Ensure that only English is used during face-to-face and online discussions
3. Continuously remind and encourage learners to practise using English in all real-life situations
4. Expect learners to have the self-initiative to enrol for extra English language lessons





# A FRESH NEW DAWN

A new year has arrived and with it, a fresh opportunity to be better and do better. The table below lists the activities the Centre for Tutor Management and Development (CTMD) has planned for tutors from January to April 2009. Why don't you have a look at the dates and jot them down in your diary or organiser? This will help you in planning your work. As the saying goes, "Failing to plan means planning to fail!"



## IMPORTANT DATES

### Upcoming Activities

ACTIVITY	DATE (2009)	REMARKS
New/ Senior Tutors/ Facilitators Training	2, 3, 4, 9, 10 & 11 January	This training programme will focus on the tutoring process, assessment methods and administrative matters that tutors need. You will be contacted by your learning centre Administrator.
Teaching Permit Application	Tutorial 2	Tutors who have not applied for a teaching permit must submit their application form to the Administrator at your learning centre before or by Tutorial 2.
National Colloquiums	April	Will be attended by selected participants comprising tutors, subject matter experts, learning centre administrators, academics, management and administrative staff.
Tutor Dialogue	To be announced by Learning Centre	The objectives are to help tutors: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop better understanding of OUM's vision, mission and values;</li> <li>Forge better ties and share experiences;</li> <li>Build a sense of belonging; and</li> <li>Express concerns, issues and suggestions.</li> </ol>
New/Senior Tutors/Facilitators Monitoring	Tutorials 1 to 5	Class observations will be done by Lead Tutors and academic staff.
Question Bank Workshop	February	Selected tutors will help to develop questions and answers for selected courses.

# A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

By AP Dr Santhi Raghavan

January 2009 sees a new change in OUM – its transition into fully using English as the main language for teaching and learning. English language, the de facto working language of most nations, will now be the medium of instruction for almost all programmes in OUM, except of course for language-based programmes such as Bahasa Malaysia, Arabic Studies, Chinese Studies and Tamil Studies.

When asked why there was a need for this move, Prof Dr Mansor Fadzil, OUM's Senior Vice President, said: "We feel that English is an important language that can propel the nation towards development and progress.

"English is an international language, transcending the barriers of distance, race and creed. The language of communication in major international meetings is English. It is also the lingua franca of the business and commercial world."

On whether this transition has caused anxiety among OUM learners and if they were receiving it with mixed feelings, Prof Mansor explained that while most of our learners did indeed learn English as a second language, they actually acquired it through use and interaction at the workplace.

"Though we may not be native users, that should not stop us from embracing the language as a language of technology," he said.

Many of our learners feel that the use of English as the medium of instruction for teaching and learning at the tertiary level is a step in the right direction. In fact, government school teachers from both primary and secondary levels too are now teaching two major subjects in school, namely, Science and Mathematics, in English.

This move by OUM will not diminish the role and importance of Bahasa Malaysia. According to Prof Mansor, while the pivotal role of the national language as the official language of the country remains unquestionable, the role of English should not be underestimated.

So what does OUM expect of its learners? Prof Mansor replied that OUM learners have been gradually introduced to the transition from Bahasa Malaysia to English since 2003. As a caring University, OUM is not imposing overnight changes. Instead, the change has been slow and



**“English is an international language, transcending the barriers of distance, race and creed.”**

steady, with examinations and assignments presented in bilingual format so as to give a choice to learners on which language to answer in.

Nevertheless, Prof Mansor expects learners to progress in their command of English. This will help them to better explore the latest developments in the world and to acquire a greater store of knowledge. This would be in line with Malaysia's goal of attaining the status of a fully developed nation by 2020. OUM's efforts can be seen as an attempt to create excellence through education, Prof Mansor concluded. **TCX**

# IMPROVING OURSELVES

By AP Dr Widad Othman

**H**appy New Year! May the year be better, brighter and more prosperous for you.

By now, I am sure most of you are aware that English will be the language used for teaching and learning in OUM, with the exception of the Teacher Education Division programmes, from this month onwards.

Looking back at our country's education scenario, English as a medium of instruction is nothing new. Academicians in public universities are encouraged to conduct lectures in English, although many are reluctant to do so ... at least in my former workplace!

There is a group which is very adamant about using Bahasa Malaysia as the medium for teaching and learning. The group preaches about the virtues of Bahasa Malaysia and how it symbolises nationalism. On the other extreme is a very English-speaking group which professes to speak perfect English. Then there is another group which speaks Malaysianised English, mixing English with Bahasa Malaysia.

Which group do you belong to? Personally, I think many of us are comfortable to be in the last group. I am too. Even though I spent most of my learning years in English, later during my teaching years, I had to be a chameleon, switching between English and Bahasa Malaysia. During my years teaching in a public university, I was instructed to lecture in English. Although my notes were in English, to assist students, I used both languages when teaching. Most of my students were very apprehensive upon seeing notes written in English. The very familiar "*Speaking lah kita dalam kelas ni ...*" comments would be heard during the first lecture.

Dear tutors, I am sure some of you applaud the switch from Bahasa Malaysia to English while some others are very apprehensive. You may be worried about your own ability or that of your students. If you are fluent in English, your worry will be your students, not you since you already possess the confidence to teach in English.

But for tutors lacking a good command of English, extra effort is required. I have been told that the difficulty in teaching in English does not involve the notes as you can read what have been prepared. The problem lies in giving explanations and engaging in simple conversations or small talk such as saying things like, "Let's start the

class today with ...," "Do you have any questions?" etc. I even have friends who lamented, "*Macam mana nak buat kelakar dalam kelas dalam BI? Susahlah ...*"

My dear friends, do not despair. There is no such thing as *tak boleh!* Here are some tips:

- Assess your command of the English vocabulary. Many of us already possess a substantial command of simple English words. However, the existing vocabulary must be enriched. The easiest way is to read an English newspaper every day. From the paper, pick 10 or more new words, find out what they mean and how to use them. Imagine, within 7 days, you will have learnt 70 new words!
- Start your conversations in English with simple sentences and phrases even if you have to start at the level of "You Jane, Me Tarzan" English. It is still an effort to speak English. Slowly but surely you will learn to make more phrases and simple sentences. You can make the sentences in Bahasa Malaysia and have friends who are good in English to assist you in translating them into English.
- Be confident! Do not worry or be embarrassed about your pronunciation or broken sentences. The *malu lah* attitude is the major culprit as to why many of us are unwilling to speak in English. Remember, as long as people can understand your English, you are on the right track. No one is perfect anyway.
- Use the 4Ds – This refers to the BM-English, English-BM, BM-BM and English-English dictionaries. You have the choice, just remember these 4Ds are there to lend a helping hand.

Dear tutors, I sincerely hope these tips will be of some use in conducting the coming tutorials. Anyway, just keep in mind that we are in the world of lifelong learning and we always learn something new every day of our lives.

I am glad to have been given the opportunity to share my thoughts with you in this issue of TCX. I would like to end by wishing you in advance a very happy and prosperous Chinese New Year. **TCX**

*AP Dr Widad Othman is the Dean of the Faculty of Education and Languages.*

# RAISING THE BAR FOR OUR GRADS

By Richard Ng

In 2002, the then prime minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed, came up with a proposal that Maths and Science be taught in English in all government schools. He noted that many government officers had a poor grasp of English and that many graduates were unable to secure a job because of their poor command. By introducing the move, he said, he hoped that Malaysians would be able to master the global language of the Internet and commerce so that they could become more knowledgeable and competitive.

Many institutions of higher learning in Malaysia started to take a proactive approach by implementing English as a medium of instruction to improve their learners' grasp of the language and increase their marketability.

**Without language and communicative competencies, the graduate employment seeker will be severely disadvantaged.**

Last year, OUM took the cue to implement the policy, with the hope of increasing the competitiveness of its programmes and bringing its graduates to higher standards. After receiving feedback from OUM learners, the management decided that, to ease learners into it, the full transition would be preceded by a policy which allowed learners to answer exam questions in either English or Bahasa Malaysia.

This January 2009 semester marks the full transition from Bahasa Malaysia to English. Are our learners ready for it? Observations of one of the courses in the online discussion forums suggest that the majority of learners already use English as the medium for discussion. Some of them might not write in perfect English but they are comfortable with it, knowing perhaps that lessons are learnt through mistakes.



In fact, a large section of OUM learners either have no issue or are happily supportive of the University's transition to English as the medium of instruction and assessment. There will of course be segments of OUM's learner population whose command of the language is still very much a work in progress, who require additional learning support to compensate for the gap, and who are, at the same time, privileged to have the opportunity to upgrade their English skills.

Let us all then make the best out of the timely transition. After all, as no one would disagree, it is ultimately not the piece of paper (the degree) that counts in graduate employment. Without language and communicative competencies, the graduate employment seeker will be severely disadvantaged. **TCX**



# ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LITERACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

By Dr Thirumeni T. Subramaniam and Sharifah Rosfashida Syed Abd Latif

The English language has been a global means of communication for a long time; for historical, political and economic reasons. Southeast Asia is one of the regions in the world where a large number of languages are spoken.

A common platform is needed for the intensification of intra-Asia exchanges, which will make the region more dynamic economically and culturally. The question is whether individuals, companies and countries in this region could keep up with the increasing demand for more and better English.

Even as the importance of English rises, proficiency in much of Asia remains poor. Standards seem to be falling even in former British colonies such as Malaysia. Despite the various efforts and support from the governments in many Asian countries to promote English, there has been little improvement.

Most Southeast Asian nations are multiracial, multilingual and multicultural. The diversity of population in each and its geographical distribution affect the patterns of English language acquisition and use among the school-going populace.

Though the use of English enables these countries to achieve economic growth and rapid socio-cultural transformation, it also threatens their national identity. This fundamental issue needs to be addressed if progress is to be seen.

The implementation of an English language policy is observable in Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines. Scholars who have been devoting their research and practice to English as an important second language in these countries may well begin paying some attention to less researched regions such as Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.

Let us take a look at the efforts by various types of organisations to improve the use of English in some of the countries in Southeast Asia:



**A common platform is needed for the intensification of intra-Asia exchanges.**

## Malaysia

A good example of how the private sector can help to improve the use of English is the Click into English joint-effort programme by Nestle Malaysia and British Council with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education. The purpose of the web-based programme is to bring English to rural schools in a fun and interesting way. Pilot projects have been launched in two states, Kedah and Terengganu. Efforts are being made to launch the programme nationwide.

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## **Vietnam**

A group of Vietnamese students in the United States formed the Vietnam Culture Development Society, a non-profit organisation to promote English literacy in Vietnam. The organisation collects books, journals and school supplies and sends them to those who need it in Vietnam. The organisation hoped to create opportunities for the new generation of Vietnam to reach out to the world and look at what their peers in other countries are doing and achieving.

## **Philippines**

In 2005, a project called Promoting English Proficiency (PEP) was initiated by the Makati Business Club's Philippines-US Business Council and the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines. The project aimed to improve English proficiency among teachers, students and the workforce, with the belief that better grasp of English would attract foreign investors and prepare Filipinos for the global workplace.

PEP conducts training using a blended approach of classroom teaching and computer-aided instruction. There were to be 50 computerised English language centres with 250 teachers and 42,000 students trained by last year.

There are various forms of collective efforts either between the countries in Southeast Asia or with countries outside the region. The above efforts highlight how various forms of organisations (government, private sector and non-profit) could work towards promoting English among various levels of population (from students to working adults), regardless of their location (urban or rural), thereby improving the English language proficiency of people from all walks of life. **TCX**

## **Singapore**

Although Singapore is considered a success story in Southeast Asia, the use of good English among its general population is a major concern. Thus, the Speak Good English Movement was launched in 2000. It encouraged those who spoke good English to become activists and role models to those who did not.

## **Brunei**

The country's Ministry of Education is planning to implement a "Reading Recovery Programme" to improve English literacy among its students nationwide. The project's primary goal is to prepare both teachers and students for a new educational system and to make reading a culture. The project is also aimed at improving the level and skill of language understanding, leading to increased self-confidence among students.

## **Thailand**

English is being taught in rural communities through international voluntary service and educational projects. For example, a project was begun last year in Ubon Ratchatani by the Pitaya Suwan Foundation (PSF), which is a charity organisation working in the field of community development and intercultural learning. Ubon Ratchatani is a city in northeast Thailand's Isan region, which is among the most traditional, poorest and least developed areas in the country. Volunteers are sent to rural areas to learn about Isan culture, visit villagers, farmers and local artisans, help them in their tasks occasionally, and hold English workshops for their children.

# ENGLISH TUTOR SPEAKS

By Lilian Kek Siew Yick

**S**ean Patrick Sta Maria has been tutoring at OUM for five years. A lecturer and language consultant, he tutors first to fourth year students on TESL methodology and literature. Sean, who is 40, originated from Malacca and is currently attached to the Petaling Jaya Learning Centre. I interviewed him recently to find out what he thought about the transition from Bahasa Malaysia to English at OUM.

**Lilian:** *What do you think are the pros of this transition?*

**Sean:** The learning process will be more hand in glove as students will focus on a language which is more predominant in journals, established textbooks and other academic or scholarly publications. It will also help as students will begin to read, think, write and articulate their thoughts in English without having to move from one language to another which in the past has resulted in very mediocre expression of thought and ideas. Later, it will enable them to integrate better into the real working environment. As students are encouraged to pursue lifelong learning, a better command of English can only help them in their pursuit of knowledge.

**Lilian:** *What do you think are the cons of this transition?*

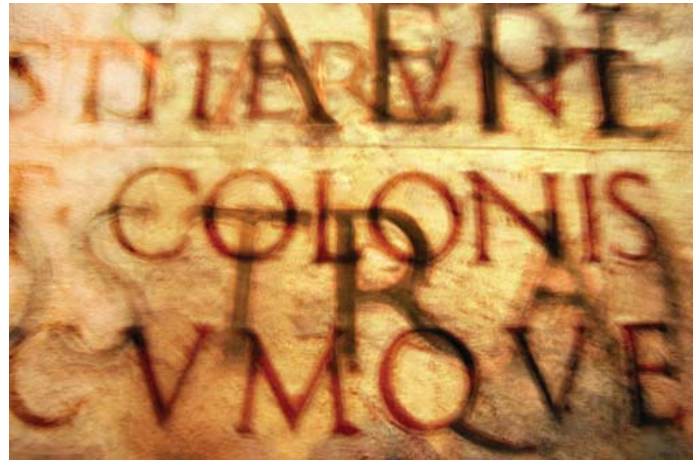
**Sean:** Some might see this move as undermining the status of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language. Also, students who have had their entire schooling in Bahasa Malaysia might feel discouraged by the transition.

**Lilian:** *What are some challenges concerning this transition that you expect? How can these be resolved?*

**Sean:** Students will struggle with the reading materials within and without the prescribed texts. Writing their thoughts accurately, cogently and coherently might be another problem. Hence, there is a need for them to undergo intensive English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) pre-courses based on their language proficiency.

**Lilian:** *How do you prepare your students for this transition?*

**Sean:** By being a motivating tutor, taking the trouble to help them along this journey and making them aware of the benefits.



**Lilian:** *In your opinion as an experienced English language tutor, what is the best way to learn English Language?*

**Sean:** Based on Stephen Kristen's acquisition theory, which I strongly subscribe to, learning a language should be through reading and communicating in the target language. Grammar should be learnt in context and not taught in a discrete way.

**Lilian:** *How could a student improve his or her English?*

**Sean:** By getting exposure through reading graded texts if necessary and aural-oral exposure to the target language.

**Lilian:** *How do you think this transition will benefit OUM, its students and tutors as a whole?*

**Sean:** It will allow and facilitate everyone's entry into the exclusive realm of academia.

**Lilian:** *Do you think tutors require any support changing from teaching in Bahasa Malaysia to teaching in English? What sort of help do they need?*

**Sean:** They may need to improve on delivery in succinct English. There is also a need for tutorial techniques to get students involved in the process of learning and not shut them off because of the language barrier. **TCX**

# TUTOR RESPONSES TO ENGLISH

By Christine Ling Bee Fong

Here are some responses from tutors about the transition to English as the main language for instruction and for all learning materials:

“I welcome it very much and fully support OUM in this effort. This shows that OUM is moving into international education. For tutors, I don’t think there is any problem; they just need to refresh again on the English content of the course. For learners, it is undeniable that some of them might face problems in grasping certain terms and concepts in English.

They need to put more effort in looking for meanings and answering questions. On the other hand, learners can take it as a challenge to master English. Most reference books and education materials are in English so this will make it easier for them in doing references and assignments.”

*Ngang Tuong Kiet  
Sibu*

“I think this is a very good move by OUM to ensure that we keep abreast with the latest knowledge and skills, which are easily accessed through the Internet in English. Advantages for learners would be that there are more reading materials in English on any subject and that it would be an added value for their career advancement.”

*Clarence Jerry  
Kuching*

“It is good to use English for course delivery because it is an international language and in the job market, English language is important for recruitment.”

*Johnadi Tang King Kai  
Sibu*



“As a science teacher, I quite agree that science subjects should be taught in English. When researchers and scientists represent the country at an international conference or seminar, we have to present our research and findings in English. Without English, we would be deaf and dumb, not able to present anything even if our research is excellent.”

*Ling Pick Yieng  
Sibu*

“Using English as a language to deliver courses as well as to assess learners, to me, is very convenient and easy. Since the language used is direct and simple, the learners definitely have no problems to understand and express themselves either. It has not been an issue for me and my students so far. But those who are from the Bahasa Malaysia medium may face some problems initially. I believe they will overcome

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it in the course of time. The best way to overcome the language problem is by reading intensively and extensively.”

*Ling Moi Hong  
Sarawak*

“I think it is a very good idea. It would be very easy for those who are fluent in the language. If those who are not familiar with the English language work hard and are conscientious about picking up the language, I think it would be smooth sailing.”

*Yeo Siok Tee  
Batu Pahat*

“The performance of OUM learners will depend very much on their attitude. If they are prepared to work hard to learn the language, it would help.”

*Loh Leh Chiong  
Sibu*

“It is a good idea but it would not be easy for tutors and students. Some OUM tutors themselves are not well-versed in English. They might perform badly in their tutoring and affect learners’ performance.”

*Dr Berhan Mohd Salleh  
Kuala Lumpur*

“I welcome this transition. The advantage is that students can improve their competency in the English language. Tutors have to guide their students slowly and make them understand the content. Gradually, the learners will be able to cope and their performance will improve.”

*Law Sze Yung  
Sibu*

“The transition is very good and stimulating. English is an international language and OUM degrees should be marketable internationally too. Students will be able to get first-hand knowledge and

tutors could impart the materials accurately. As for the performance of the learners – I think it does not matter. Only quality should matter.

Then, students would have to study harder and be more serious in studying. They should be more independent. We as tutors should do our part by encouraging them to study harder.”

*Lau Hieng Soon  
Sibu*

“I think this is in line with OUM’s vision to become a renown university and the number one open and distance university in the country. Most tutors won’t face any problems handling the materials in English. In fact, I think they will probably be more comfortable delivering the lessons in English.

Some learners might face problems in communicating and understanding the materials but they will become more marketable since most companies will look for employees who are proficient in English.

Besides, in this globalised world, English is the language of information and development as well as progress. We do not want to be left behind.

We as tutors should encourage students to read and use English whenever and wherever possible. Motivate students to use the language and tell them that there is nothing to laugh at if we falter in using English as everyone makes mistakes when learning another language. Do not penalise students for language errors.

Remind them always that we are not looking at language; rather, we are more concerned with the ideas that they are trying to convey. Encourage students to ask the tutors to repeat or explain again whenever they have problems in understanding any concept or idea that is being taught.”

*Koay Soon Yuan  
Batu Pahat*

# LEARNER VIEWPOINTS

By Nik Azlina Nik Yaacob

“Teaching and learning should be conducted in English. In courses like mine, Business, it is better if the teaching is conducted in English. This is because nowadays, the business world uses more English terms, so when I learn in English, it is easy and very helpful.”

*Khairul Jamila  
Kota Kinabalu*

“I prefer the modules to be in English. This could enhance the English standard of students.”

*Chan Pei Ling  
Sarawak*

“I think some of the students find it difficult to learn English unless they are taught using both Bahasa Malaysia and English. Tutors could speak and teach in English but they also need to explain in Bahasa Malaysia, where necessary.”

*Arifin  
Kuala Terengganu*

“I like English as it is easier for me to understand and learn. I have confidence in it, so I hope the use of English could be strictly implemented at OUM.”

*Jung Moi Kian  
Sarawak*

“There will be advantages and disadvantages. The advantage goes to the majority of students who have minimal understanding in English and the advantage is that students have the opportunity to strive hard to master this language well.”

*Tan Mui Hiong  
Kota Kinabalu*

“I support this transition 100% as it could level up OUM’s reputation and the ability of OUM students in writing and speaking as well.”

*M. Shahril  
Kuala Terengganu*

“I agree with the proposal in order to produce high-quality education. However, full transition will affect students’ result as most students are working parents/adults and have limited time for studying. I suggest for the implementation to be done by stages.”

*Asdiana  
Sandakan*

“The transition should have been done from the time OUM opened. I support things being done in English. A lot of learning materials are in English. It is easier to understand ICT in English rather than in Bahasa Malaysia, as I find some terms to be awkward.”

*Mohd Kahirul  
Kuala Terengganu*

*“Tidak berapa setuju dengan cadangan ini kerana bagi mereka yang bukan major Bahasa Inggeris mereka akan bermasalah untuk mendalami modul tersebut kerana terpaksa membuat penterjemahan bahasa. Kadangkala isi kandungan modul agak mengelirukan walaupun dalam Bahasa Malaysia.”*

*Roslinda  
Kota Kinabalu*

*“Bergantung kepada major dan minor yang diambil, jika Matematik dan Sains mungkin sesuai digunakan Bahasa Inggeris, subjek yang lain tidak perlu kerana tiada amalan di sekolah.”*

*Rohadi  
Kuala Terengganu*

*“Saya tidak setuju dengan pelaksanaan Bahasa Inggeris kerana sukar bagi saya untuk memahaminya dengan sepenuhnya.”*

*John Samuel  
Sandakan*

# PERFORMING WITH PASSION

By Hardev Kaur Jujar Singh

**P**assion is needed in whatever we do in order to achieve satisfaction. Passion is very much needed in the teaching profession as well. When we teach with passion, it will help our students to do well, thereby giving us satisfaction. Our students are the assets of this country and we must feel proud that we are contributing towards the nation.

Our students are part-timers who have taken the bold step of seeking education for their betterment while continuing to work. Some are also parents. Therefore, great efforts are needed from tutors to guide our students in achieving the expected level of proficiency in the English language. The following are some ideas that passionate tutors could implement in tutorials:

- English must be the only language used in the classroom. This rule must be strictly observed at all times by both tutors and students. If a student uses another language to speak with a tutor, the latter should reply in English. The tutor should encourage the student to converse in English. Consequently, students will learn to converse in English and this would boost their confidence in the situation.
- Tell students of the topics to be covered beforehand. This is important to ensure that they participate actively during tutorials.

- Remind them to look up in the dictionary words which look alien to them.
- Hold group discussions and ensure two-way communication to encourage participation. Correct mistakes in students' use of English when necessary. If possible, note the mistakes without disrupting the discussion. If the mistakes are minimal, on-the-spot correction could be done by peers or the tutor. If the mistakes are many and glaring, the correction is best done after the group discussion.
- Hold a mini grammar lesson after the group discussion. This could help the students to learn fundamental grammar rules.
- Organise role-playing activities as these could inject confidence in students, which could benefit them outside the classroom.
- Use humour to make lessons interesting.

As passionate tutors, we can make a difference in the teaching-learning experience of our students.

*Hardev Kaur Jujar Singh is a tutor at the Petaling Jaya learning centre in Selangor. We are pleased to present Hardev with RM50 as a token of appreciation for contributing this article.*



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# IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO LEARN

The first day of college, our professor challenged us to get to know someone we didn't already know. I stood up to look around when a gentle hand touched my shoulder.

I turned around to find a wrinkled, little old lady beaming at me. She said, "Hi, my name is Rose. I'm 87 years old. Can I give you a hug?" I laughed and responded, "Of course you may!" and she gave me a giant squeeze.

"Why are you in college at such a young, innocent age?" I asked. She jokingly replied, "I'm here to meet a rich husband, get married, have a couple of children, and then retire and travel."

"No seriously," I asked. I was curious what may have motivated her to be taking on this challenge at her age. "I always dreamed of having a college education and now I'm getting one!" she told me.

We became instant friends. I was always mesmerised listening to this "time machine" as she shared her wisdom and experience with me. Over the year, Rose became a campus icon and easily made friends wherever she went. She revelled in the attention bestowed upon her by the other students. She was living it up.

At the end of the semester, we invited Rose to speak at our football banquet. I'll never forget what she taught us. She said: "We do not stop playing because we are old; we grow old because we stop playing."

"There are only four secrets to staying young, being happy and achieving success. "You have to laugh and find humour every day. You've got to have a dream. When you lose your dreams, you die. We have so many people walking around who are dead and don't even know it!"

"There is a huge difference between growing older and growing up. If you are 19 years old and lie in bed for one full year and don't do one productive thing, you will turn 20 years old. If I am 87 years old and stay in bed for a year and never do anything, I will turn 88. Anybody can grow older. That doesn't take any talent or ability. The idea is to grow up by always finding the opportunity in change."

"Have no regrets. The elderly usually don't have regrets for what we did but rather for things we did not do. The only people who fear death are those with regrets."



**“There is a huge difference between growing older and growing up.”**

At year's end, Rose finished the college degree she had begun all those years ago. One week after graduation Rose died peacefully in her sleep.

Over 2000 college students attended her funeral in tribute to the wonderful woman who taught by example that it's never too late to be all that you can possible. **TCX**

Adapted from: All Day Inspiration and Motivation  
at <http://www.inspireme.net/inspirational-stories/dreams.htm>



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