

**MOS Gan Siow Huang's Congratulatory Speech for the Inspiring
Teacher of English Awards Ceremony 2024**

The POD @ National Library Board, 1 October 2024, 1600 – 1800

A very good afternoon,

Mr Jason Leow, Chairman of the Speak Good English Movement

Mr Lim Han Ming, Deputy Managing Editor, The Straits Times

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen.

INTRODUCTION

1. It is a pleasure to be here with you today at the Inspiring Teacher of English Awards ceremony, to recognise our inspiring English language teachers and their invaluable contributions.

2. This year marks the seventeenth year of the award, celebrating outstanding members of the English Language teaching fraternity.

3. I would like to thank the Speak Good English Movement and The Straits Times for partnering MOE all these years in affirming and honouring the efforts of our English language

teachers, many of whom have inspired a love of English Language learning in our students.

THE CRUCIAL ROLE PLAYED BY ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS TODAY

4. In Singapore, English serves as a unifying force. It enables effective communication and understanding in our multicultural society, fostering social cohesion and national identity. Beyond our shores, the English language holds unparalleled significance as the global language of business, diplomacy and academia, facilitating cross-cultural exchange and collaboration.

5. Many of us who have travelled or studied abroad can testify to the importance of English. It serves as a bridge that connects individuals from different parts of the world, enabling collaboration and mutual understanding. In today's world of global competition, the ability to communicate effectively in English continues to be essential.

6. The role of English language teachers in equipping our students with the skills to navigate and thrive in this global landscape cannot be overstated. Our students' experiences in English language lessons allow them to connect affectively with global issues, examining perspectives of different groups with

sensitivity, empathy and discernment, and to express themselves creatively and confidently.

7. I may not be an English language teacher, but I am certain it is an exciting and fulfilling job. Beyond building a strong language foundation and communication skills –

a) You help students build vital skills for the future: critical and adaptive thinking skills, information literacy skills and collaboration skills.

b) You also help students build self-confidence, to find their voice and express themselves in thoughtful ways for interacting with others and in different contexts.

8. Doing all of these is no easy feat. It involves skilful lesson design and planning, trying out and using innovative and meaningful pedagogies, so that students experience the “joy of learning”. I say “joy of learning” as English language learning could be technical, and for learning English to be a joy, teachers are really important.

9. On this note, I hope that our teachers set aside time for their own professional learning and growth. It is important for all of us

to nourish ourselves, to make time to engage in professional learning. Take advantage of the different opportunities to strengthen your subject and pedagogical mastery.

10. An important part of professional learning today includes keeping abreast of developments in today's technology-enriched world. Lately, there have been many conversations about the role of Artificial Intelligence in teaching and learning, and we know of English language teachers working in teams, experimenting with the potential of AI to support English language learning.

11. For example, within the Student Learning Space, teachers can now use the Language Feedback Assistant for English (LangFA-EL) to provide students with immediate feedback on their writing. The more we try out and learn together using AI and Ed Tech, the more effective we will be in wielding it effectively to enhance learning.

12. While we recognise that AI has the potential to complement and enhance the work of English language teachers, we know that it cannot replace the human touch, the expertise and the professional judgement of teachers. As teachers, you are alive to your students' needs. You understand their interests,

readiness and development levels, and are also in the best position to make good decisions on how to help them learn and grow.

RECOGNITION OF AWARDEES

13. The eight teachers we celebrate today exemplify what it means to be an inspiring teacher of English. They are passionate about the English Language and use a variety of innovative pedagogies to meet their students' needs. They are positive role models in their use of English and inspire their students and peers to develop a deep appreciation of the language.

14. Let me share a few examples.

15. One of our recipients is Ms Wang Pei Hua Lydia, a primary school teacher from St Andrew's Mission School.

a. Lydia believes that every student, regardless of their abilities or challenges, deserves access to a quality education that meets their learning needs. She is committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment where all students can thrive.

b. She uses drama pedagogy, such as Reader's Theatre, to enthuse her students in their learning. She encourages students to read aloud with a purpose and to practise perspective-taking, thereby building their confidence in using the language.

16. Another recipient is Ms Sarah Christian who teaches General Paper (GP) at Victoria Junior College.

a. Believing that it is crucial for her students to feel emotionally engaged with their learning, Sarah uses student-led discussions and empathy building scenarios. She invites them to use their real-world experiences, observations and emotions as the basis of their discussions and debates.

b. Sarah encourages her students to articulate and justify their viewpoints using Socratic questioning and dialogic teaching. Through this fostering of an inclusive and supportive learning environment, students develop greater confidence in communicating and collaborating with one another.

17. And finally, Mr Mohamed Firdaus, Subject Head English Literature at Tanjong Katong Girls' School, who is one of the

recipients of the Leadership Award. As an instructional leader, Firdaus nurtures the joy of teaching in his team of Literature teachers in a few ways.

- a. He engenders ownership by giving teachers autonomy to co-design the Literature curriculum.
- b. He builds on the collective wisdom of his teachers to curate a common language for feedback. This has led to greater clarity in the learning outcomes and stronger student learning outcomes and responses.
- c. He also works closely with the department's Professional Learning Teams to investigate the use of 'Responsive Pedagogies' such as Thinking Routines and Differentiated Instruction.
- d. All these create a safe and open culture of collaboration and growth in his department.

CONCLUSION

18. This afternoon, there are many inspiring English educators sitting amongst us who are making a difference each day in big and small ways. I am truly heartened and encouraged by your spirit and dedication.

19. Ladies and gentlemen, let us extend our heartiest congratulations to all the nominees, award recipients and their schools. We are very proud of you.

20. I encourage all of you to continue with your hard work and heart work, and to explore innovative and meaningful approaches to build a strong English language foundation in our students. Even today there are students who grow up in families who don't use English as the main language. Thank you for all your efforts.

21. Thank you.