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Stop talking and start reading to catch up

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TOO many things have been said about the need to improve our level of proficiency in English.

It appears that people are blaming the lack of English proficiency for our inability to grasp new knowledge. These people are saying that since Malaysians are not proficient in English, then they can't read books in English and are unable to feed on the knowledge contained therein.

Sounds like a chain reaction theory, one thing leading to the other.

Malaysians might not be as superior as others when it comes to English usage, but most of them - especially the youths - know it well enough to read books and digest what is in them.

But, we are unable to gain new knowledge. Now, why is that? The reason why Malaysians are unable to absorb new knowledge is not because they are not able to read books, but rather because they are too lazy to read.

So it doesn't matter how good people may be with their English. It still wouldn't make any difference if they lack the reading habit.

So much have been said about the so-called need to emphasise the importance of English grammar, to pronounce words correctly as well as about the lack of quality of our undergraduates and teachers. But, everyone is missing the real issue here.

First of all, everyone is quoting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech on the subject. However, what they didn't understand was that the Prime Minister was not so much speaking about the use of English as the need to gain the knowledge, which is unfortunately mostly available in English.

Should our society be turned into bookworms, I'm sure this issue would be resolved.

Japan became the second most economically powerful nation not because of its citizens' proficiency in English, but because of the knowledge they possess.

Most Malaysians are able to digest the knowledge provided in any textbook. They might not be able to efficiently speak and write in English like some people, but to say they cannot read English books is an insult.

So people, instead of talking - in English - too much, why don't we all start grabbing the books and read?