

Improve English? Just teach it in English, not BM
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Responding to the story 'Muhyiddin to order review of teaching of English', it is my contention that the general standard of English has fallen below ground zero over the years, simply because teaching of English at grassroots level is mainly conducted through Bahasa Malaysia.

It is not the teaching of English per se that is at fault, it is not the curriculum that undermines the learning, also it has got nothing to do with our youngsters' abilities to learn the language. When the teaching and learning of English relies heavily on the use of Bahasa Malaysia for most part of primary and secondary education, no amount of curriculum review, methodological reorientation or content repositioning can provide answers to this on-going dilemma.

The minister of education admitted that he simply could not understand why students could not pick up the basic language skills despite going through 13 years of classroom learning.

Well at least the minister knows something has gone very wrong somewhere and he chooses the time-consuming way of going through data collection, fact finding plus a final report on recommendations and remedies.

Again, at the end of the day, this report will not reveal that the teaching of English is largely conducted through the use of Bahasa Malaysia at grassroots level.

English must be taught through the use of English, save for those initial years at primary schools. The minister can actually go around any rural or semi-rural school, get hold of a few English language teachers at random and speak to them using simple English.

It would be generally expected that the majority of these so-called trained and qualified English teachers will not be able to communicate using simple and plain English. If speaking simple English is hell of a big problem for English teachers, how do we expect them to conduct language classes effectively?

The declining standard of English is a big issue but the truth is very simple. It all falls to the teachers themselves but it is not their fault anyway, as they themselves are products of our national schools system.

Once again, if we care to admit truthfully, our English standard is so bad that we cannot rely on our own system to groom future English teachers. In order to teach any language, one must be fluent and competent at least verbally.

It is high time we look at the problem honestly. English teachers that rely on Bahasa Malaysia to teach English must be replaced by competent ones who speak the language. If there is a need to rely on more foreign teachers to conduct English lessons, why not just do it now?