

Need not ridicule Zahid over 'Oh my English', say KL folk
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Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi was condemned by many for his English proficiency over his [speech](#) made at the United Nations general assembly last week.

Many had criticised his pronunciation of certain words while some had also questioned why the deputy premier did not simply opt to speak Bahasa Malaysia.

But does the deputy prime minister really deserve the condemnation and ridicule over his not so perfect English?

Malaysiakini spoke to several city folk and although almost all of them denounced the scorn rained on Zahid, they admitted that he has to make efforts to further improve his English speaking skills.

Nor Amalina Abd Rahim, who works in the private sector, suggested that Zahid go for classes to improve his communication skills.

“He has to improve because he’s the deputy prime minister,” said the 32-year-old, who also acknowledged that leaders of other countries like Japan do not speak English.

“Maybe to improve himself (and) as the future prime minister of Malaysia, he should (therefore) improve,” she said.

She however disagreed with Zahid being condemned, stating that it was not fair as Zahid was “trying very hard” at the UN general assembly.

“Not everyone can speak at the UN general assembly. So we can credit him for speaking in front of a crowd.”

For retiree S Adimulam, the deputy premier was someone that should be respected.

“It’s good that he went there representing the prime minister. He’s not just anybody, we should respect him.

“He represents Malaysia [...] As citizens we shouldn’t condemn him, if he’s not good how can he be the deputy prime minister.”

The 69-year-old said it was normal for people to make mistakes and said that even the prime minister, sometimes, has slips of the tongue.

“Sometimes, we, too, make mistakes. No one is perfect a hundred percent.

“This is the number two man, not number five, we must respect our leaders,” he stressed.

Those who condemned Zahid, he added, are not standing in his shoes.

“Those who are condemning him, are their English so good?

“He’s the deputy prime minister, don’t forget that, he’s not stupid. It’s not like he doesn’t know even a little English,” he added.

His advice for those who have condemned Zahid is for them to go to school and to prove their English superiority.

“Before we condemn others, we should look at ourselves first,” he said.

‘Top leaders must improve’

Lim (not his real name), also pointed out how everyone is only human who makes mistakes.

“We don’t condemn each other.

“It’s just that, as a person representing the country, he should be able to keep our country’s integrity,” he said.

And although it is important for everyone to improve themselves, it is more so for Zahid as a top leader.

“He should also improve, he represents the country,” added Lim.

Forty-year-old Mohd Omar Hamdan, meanwhile, praised Zahid's effort to master another language and believes that everyone should be given a chance.

As to Zahid being ridiculed, Omar said everyone was entitled to his or her opinion in a democracy.

"But before you say something, you should look at yourself first," he added.

Nevertheless, the private sector worker admitted that since English is a much utilised language in the global arena, Zahid as a leader must make efforts to fully master his command of the English language.

Writer Ikhwan Zulkaflee, too, is of the opinion that the country's number two leader should not be slammed for delivering his speech in English at the UN general assembly.

"His English is not perfect, admittedly, but even native English speakers don't use the language perfectly.

"What is important is that his message was delivered," he said, pointing out that it was only Malaysians who had condemned the leader as opposed to others.

Cheryl Law, 18, pointed out how nobody is perfect.

"When you make mistakes then only (will you) have space for improvement. (So) I wouldn't condemn," she said.

"People should encourage and not discriminate and judge. Stop condemning because everyone makes mistakes."

'He made effort'

Her friend, fellow mass communication student Sarah Joy Lim, also 18, agreed.

"I would praise him (since) at least he made an effort," she said.

Zahid, however, must improve his English if he wants to avoid others from judging him.

Chipping in, Law said this is because Zahid was representing Malaysians in the global arena.

“It would be good if he can make an effort and also afford the time because he's deputy prime minister.

“I'm sure he's busy with a lot of things, but made the effort to go for it,” she said.

Should Zahid, perhaps, simply speak in Bahasa Malaysia? Law believes there are both pros and cons to it.

“It's our national language, it's good you are promoting it. But sometimes it's appropriate to speak English since it's an international language and the UN is an international level,” she said.

Comparing Zahid with the prime minister of Japan (Shinzo Abe) who does not speak English at international events, Cheryl said this depended on one's fluency of the English language.

“If they insist on speaking using the national language, go ahead because they may struggle in learning English.

“But our deputy prime minister should make an effort, try to speak in English,” she said.

'Better not have spoken'

Mohd Nazrin Jaafar, on the other hand believes that Zahid should not have spoken at the UN general assembly altogether.

“Rather than embarrassing himself, he shouldn't have spoken at all,” said the 34-year-old.

Speaking Bahasa Malaysia, he believes, would have been the better option.

“One way for Zahid to improve his English is by going for classes,” added Nazrin, who works with transport operator Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM).

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