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I READ with great interest the comments about the level of English among students by the end of their education.

Let us evaluate ourselves to strengthen the acquisition of this global language.

I believe all the stakeholders in English language education have to do some soul searching. It is the responsibility of teachers, students, parents and policymakers.

English is not the primary language for many of us who teach it . But we can make the transition from non-native users to near-native users. This will strengthen English language education.

To do this, a paradigm shift is essential.

Policymakers need to take into account the quality of teachers recruited to teach the language. An increase in hours allocated is secondary. An increased amount of language instruction may not always translate into meaningful learning and efficient teaching.

A quality teacher is the single most important factor in the desire to see improvement in English language education in the country. But teachers have to be complemented by their wards and the parents.

English language teachers ought to be committed to their vocation. Gaining a teaching qualification is the beginning of a journey that requires ongoing learning and a passion for teaching.

Teachers and students today are fortunate to have access to the Internet and cable television, which were non-existent not too long ago.

What made students excel in English before the advent of these two mediums? They relied mostly on their teachers, books in the library and newspapers and magazines. They were avid readers.

For successful language learning, motivation has to be mutual.

On the part of teachers, the motivation to have a fluent command of the language, to speak the language and use it in a grammatically-correct manner must receive priority.

The task of teaching English should not be left to people with inadequate training. The training should be in the form of in-service training, attending professional gatherings and participate in academic seminars.

Teachers need to evaluate the effectiveness of their performance through peer feedback for growth.

They must expose themselves to role models of the language by listening to news networks whose anchors have international intelligibility so that they can become aware of the use of the language.

Teachers may engage in action research, which is small-scale research involving their own students and the institution they are employed in. By identifying weaknesses in English education, teachers can minimise students' learning difficulties.

English language teachers need to show interest in the literature of the language as well. By reading literary works, they will appreciate and enjoy the language.

English teachers must be comfortable with the language in its contexts, occupational and social.

They must develop the confidence to carry a conversation with those who speak the language habitually.

Employing language teachers from countries whose majority population uses English is a welcome move. This will give their local colleagues increased opportunities to be exposed to the attributes of native speech and increase their self-esteem to use the language.

Students, on their part, need to be self-motivated to make improvements. They may express their thoughts in social media websites, such as Facebook, using proper English.

Parents must encourage their children to be proficient in English as this will make it easier for them in tertiary education, enable them to have increased employment opportunities and gain exposure to a world view.

A simple pass in English must be made compulsory in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia examination. This will encourage parents and pupils to be serious about the subject.

It is through these factors that we can make a difference in students' quality of English.

DR HAJA MOHIDEEN MOHAMED ALI

Department of English

International Islamic University Malaysia

Gombak, Selangor