

ENGLISH MATTERS

DIRECT ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING • DIRECT ENGLISH INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE CENTRE

A Chat with Tunku Iskandar

A-OK?

Perhaps the most used word by almost everyone in the world is “OK”. It was supposedly derived from “oll korrekt”, which was maybe a whimsical short-form of “all correct”. It has entered practically all languages.

Today we merrily use “OK” (sometimes “okay”) with different degrees and nuances, from confirming something is perfect to merely acknowledging something is adequate, so much so we sometimes have to seek confirmation like, “is it just OK or is it really OK?!” That being said, it does lend itself perfectly to mobile phone texting abbreviating alongside “LOL”, “BTW”, “TBC” and “ASAP” which today have entered our mainstream communications including face-to-face exchanges, email messaging but also sometimes even more formal letter-writing and classroom essays.

An unfortunate outcome of this is the deterioration of the English language used in office and education environments as borne out not only with the use of texting abbreviations in business letters and in dissertations, but also accompanied by lack of attention and care in grammar, whether it is use of correct tenses, spelling or punctuation marks. The lack of attention to these will no doubt have a negative perception by the



reader of the sender or the sender’s company or of the answer script in a classroom or examination scenario.

Against this, we should also need to be cognisant that all languages evolve over time and generations but the worry today is that the accelerated rate of change as seen and felt by baby boomers and millennials alike, has resulted in us seeing these changes taking place within a single lifetime.

Winston Churchill may or may not have foreseen these extent of the use of abbreviations of words when he said, “Broadly speaking, the short words are the best, and the old words best of all” but he seems to have encompassed the overall concept in that brief comment!

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