

Creating right environment

LAST month, the Government announced a new policy that would make the English language a mandatory pass subject at university-level.

I believe that everyone should have a keen interest in English as it will help them achieve a lot in their lives.

In today's global world, the importance of English cannot be denied and ignored since it is the most commonly used language in the world.

According to the study done by the Ethnologue: Top 100 Languages by Population, the English language is now considered as the third most common native language in the world, after Mandarin and Spanish.

The language is widely learned as a second language and is an official language of the European Union, many Commonwealth countries and the United Nations, as well as in many regional and world organisations.

With the help of developing technology, the English language has been playing a major role in many sectors including law, com-

munication, medicine, engineering, scientific research as well as in education, which, in my opinion, is the most important arena where English is needed.

As a developing country, Malaysia needs to make use of this worldwide spoken language in order to prove its international connections and future role as well as achieving its fully-developed nation status by 2020.

Currently, English is the medium of instruction at universities and colleges in the country and this has been so for the following reasons – finding a high-quality job, communicating with international world communities, and accessing scientific sources in the student's major field.

Sadly, many students do not realise the importance of this international language.

Many just want to learn the language as it is one of the required subjects they need to pass in order to get into university.

Once they enter university, many simply ignore the language. As such, it is the role of the management of

universities, especially the educators, to explain to the students about the importance of this language as well as create an environment conducive to encouraging the students to fully make use of the language.

Establishing self-access centres, English-speaking areas, and English conversation clubs are just examples of the attempts to create the natural environment for the use of English.

The self-access centre refers to a place where the students can learn English independently, as the place has a number of learning facilities, such as books, record players, television sets and others.

Setting up an English-speaking area is another way of creating a natural environment that is conducive to English-learning.

In this case, a certain area in the campus is chosen as the place where English must be spoken.

Any student or educator entering the area must speak in English. If there is anyone who breaks the rule, he or she may be fined a certain amount of money.

Though currently many universities are allowed to have their own "Speaker's Corner" due to the 2010 amendment to the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 (Act 30), this is hardly the case.

In order to further encourage students to speak and communicate well in English, establishing an English Conversation Club in the university is another way of creating a natural environment for English-learning.

Members of the group should be equally competent students to guarantee that each member is brave enough to speak. It is important to note that all the measures taken to improve the quality of English among our students shouldn't be seen as being not nationalistic towards our first language as it is equally important for students to keep using their first language as well as be able to master other languages in order to compete internationally.

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