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No emphasis and poor teachers the causes, say employers



Datuk Shamsudin Bardan

PETALING JAYA: The lack of emphasis on English in school and poor quality of teachers are among the reasons Malaysian fresh graduates still struggle with the language, according to employers.

“Based on feedback from our members, English is still a major problem as far as fresh graduates are concerned.

“There is a lack of emphasis on the subject in our education system and this results in our students not having interest in learning and mastering English,” Malaysian Employers Federation secretary Datuk Shamsudin Bardan said yesterday.

He was responding to a statement by Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin that “something is not right” when students are still struggling with the English language when they enter university.

Muhyiddin, who is also Education Minister, had said the students spent so many years learning English and should have mastered the language during their time in school.

He was speaking during a dialogue on the Malaysian Higher Education Blueprint 2015-2025 on Tuesday.

Shamsudin added that unfit teachers was a major reason for the poor level of English.

He cited reports that about 70% out of the 60,000 English language teachers who recently sat for the English Language Cambridge Placement Test performed poorly.

“If we have these teachers who have not mastered the language themselves, of course our students are going to be the ones affected,” he said.

Online recruitment portal myStarjob.com manager Ivy Leong attributed the poor command of English to students wanting to stick to their “comfort zone” and failing to realise the importance of the language.

“If they are given the option to study their courses in their preferred language, many would not choose English as they prefer to stick to the language they are most comfortable with.

“Secondly, it’s the lack of self-confidence.

“They are worried that people will tease them or mock them (if they speak English).

“Thus they miss the opportunity to learn and improve,” she said.

JobStreet.com’s country manager Chook Yuh Yng said poor communication skills in English was the second biggest problem among fresh graduates – the first being poor attitude and unrealistic salary expectations.

She said Malaysian students lacked proficiency in English as many did not use the language as a medium of communication and the learning of the language was confined to the classroom.