

LEARNING LADDER

Doing business in Malay

The Singapore University of Social Sciences launches its first language course with a unique approach

BRYANT CHAN

IN TODAY'S economy, it is becoming increasingly easy to overlook the importance of the Malay language in a business context — particularly with the recent interest in Sino-Singaporean relations.

But even though English dominates the boardroom and office, Malay is, and will continue to remain, a key regional language.

To address this, the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) has introduced its inaugural Business Malay course this month, aimed at supporting the internationalisation of local businesses.

"This course will prepare a workforce that is conversant in Malay and culturally informed to penetrate the Malay-speaking market," says Dr Lim Beng Soon, associate professor and head of Malay language and literature at SUSS.

The course aims to take a more immersive approach as compared to conventional language courses, as its lessons incorporate what Dr Lim refers to as "natural language data".

This allows lecturers to avoid oversimplification or heavy reliance on rote learning, and instead, encourage their students to understand the nuances of business conversation in Malay from contextual clues.

Students are encouraged to take their learning outside the classroom as well. In accordance with SUSS' heavy emphasis on e-learning, the faculty has compiled an online textbook for students' use, which has audio, video and web links for students to access at any time from their smartphones or tablets, freeing them from the confines of the classroom.

According to Dr Lim, these approaches are key to building fluency and confidence in Malay.

Cultivating language appreciation

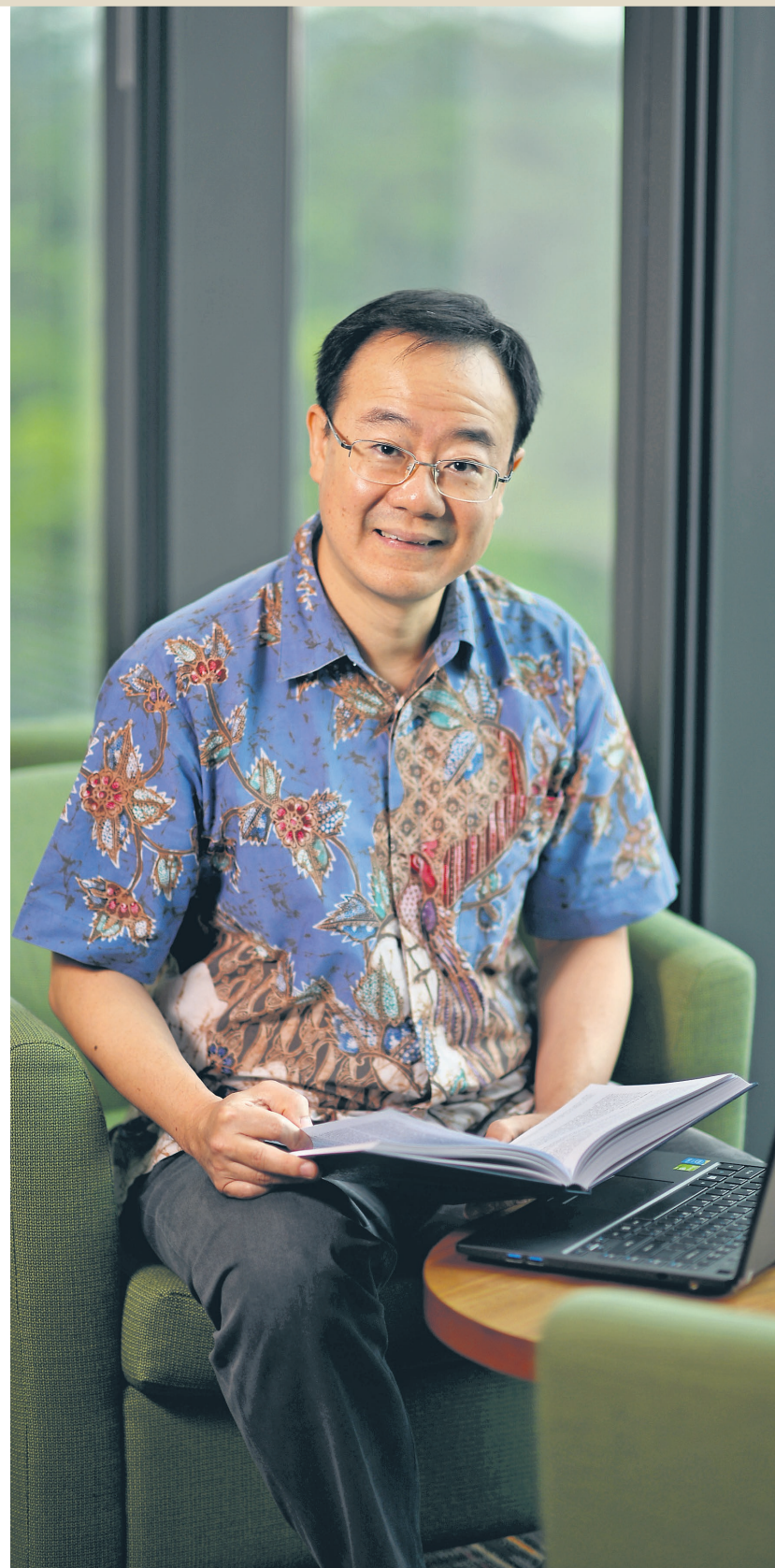
But he says it is not enough to learn the language merely in a business context.

Of utmost importance to him is that those enrolled in the Business Malay course receive cultural tips and pointers, so that they become more attuned to Malay culture and sensitivities.

This not only makes them better negotiators, he says, but also instils in them a better appreciation for the language and culture.

"In this way, the course becomes a conduit for our students to understand immediate and important Malay-speaking markets through their language and culture," says Dr Lim.

"In time, we hope to build a culturally informed, self-motivated Malay language learner."



Dr Lim wants to ensure that students enrolled in the course get cultural tips and pointers to become more attuned to Malay culture and sensitivities. PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

IN A NUTSHELL

COURSE: Business Malay

DURATION: Thursday evenings (7pm to 10pm) and Saturday mornings (9am to 12noon); 10 sessions, once a week; a 2.5 hour assessment on the following Friday evening after the last session

CLASS SCHEDULE: Aug 2, 16, 23 and 30; Sept 6, 13, 20 and 27; Oct 4 and 11;

ASSESSMENT DATE: Oct 19 (7pm to 10pm)

TOTAL COURSE FEE: \$1,700 including assessment fee (before GST) (subsidy of up to 90 per cent available)

ENTRY REQUIREMENT: No Malay language skills needed

Visit <http://www.suss.edu.sg/CET/Pages/Business-Malay.aspx> for more information.