



The International Journal of Language Studies

ISSN: 3078-2244 (Online)

2026, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 126–147

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60087/ijls.vol3.n2.008>

Journal homepage: <https://ijlangstudies.org>



The EMI Spectrum in Southeast Asia: A Typology of Singaporean and Malaysian Universities

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Abstract

The increase in adoption of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) and in changes on social, cultural, and language properties at tertiary level requires an in-detail examination of language policies and support mechanisms. This study aims to inspect and draw comparisons between English proficiency requirements and national and university-based support mechanisms of EMI universities in Malaysia and Singapore through qualitative typology and content and document analysis. The findings illustrate that the National University of Singapore adopts a more program-specific and meticulous approach on the acceptance of language proficiency tests, while others are more flexible. Local and international students of the universities have different admission requirements regarding language proficiency tests, such as the local Malaysian University English Test (MUET). Score threshold vary by program level, institutional context, and across program levels (e.g., foundation or postgraduate). Singaporean universities follow national initiatives like the Speak Good English Movement (SGM) and lean towards large-scale widely accepted language proficiency examinations such as IELTS and TOEFL, compared to local examinations. On the contrary, Malaysian universities reflect the pragmatic practices of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and adopt the Dual Language Programme (DLP) that considers proficiency in STEM subjects in English (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) as its focal point, instead of rigid grammatical accuracy. The findings accentuate the distinct nature of individual EMI language policies and the necessary parallel between admission requirements, academic expectations, student demographics and EMI. Implications for policymakers and stakeholders on reinforcing equity and effectiveness in multilingual and multicultural EMI programs are offered based on the findings.

Keywords: EMI; tertiary education; proficiency requirements; language support; Southeast Asia

Article information: Received: 20/01/2026;

Accepted: 26/04/2026;

Published: 25/06/2026

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1. Introduction

English Medium Instruction (EMI) has been a growing phenomenon around the globe in the last two decades. Especially in Asian contexts, many institutions include EMI programs to increase their universities' global rankings and prestige, student success in both content and language and the number of international students (Kirkpatrick, 2014). Within the Asian context, four universities, namely National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, Universiti Teknologi Petronas and University of Malaya in Malaysia, stand out for their EMI programs on the ground that these universities have been ranked in the top 100 universities in Asia, according to Times Higher Education (2025).

Thus, the current study aims to investigate official EMI policy documents in these universities to determine how top universities in Singapore and Malaysia implement EMI programs and make comparisons where necessary. EMI is a term used far and wide geographically often but not solely applied to tertiary education (Macaro et al., 2018). Macaro (2018, p. 19) defines EMI as “the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English”. This definition of EMI has no clear-cut language learning objectives (Macaro, 2018), which makes EMI different from other forms of content and/or language teaching approaches (Sahan et al., 2022). Richards and Pun’s (2023) continuum of EMI adapted from Thompson and Mckinley’s (2018) continuum of additive bilingual programs accentuates the difference in EMI when compared to other focus on content and focus on language programs.

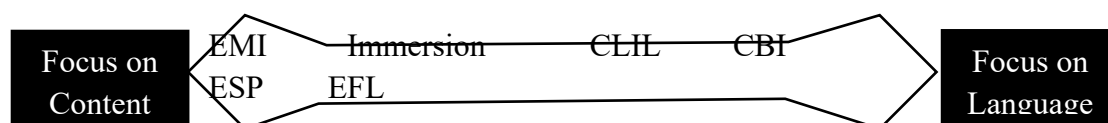


Figure 1. Continuum of EMI (Richards and Pun, 2023, p. 219)

As seen in the continuum, EMI programs focus solely on content and ignore language at face value. Nonetheless, EMI requires proficiency not only in teaching discipline content but also proficiency in communicating and transferring discipline content to the learners (Walkinshaw et al., 2017). In this sense, EMI is occasionally referred to as a tool for academic study to gain content knowledge by using English without explicit language learning aims or outcomes in settings where the majority do not speak English (Madhavan Brochier, 2016; Taguchi, 2014). At its core, EMI falls into two broad categories, namely partial EMI and full EMI. Partial EMI is considered as the setting where the home language and English are used for the translation of course contents via code-switching, and coursebooks and examinations are in English (Poon, 2013). Full EMI is considered a setting where English is the only medium of instruction in class, and the home language is never resorted to by teachers and students (Chou, 2018). Different institutions in various parts of the globe adopt partial or full EMI programs, and none of the classifications of EMI is used as a global standard (Pennycook, 2012). Perhaps the struggle for a global standard for EMI programs lies in the complexity of requirements needed for the successful implementation of EMI programs. The successful implementation of EMI programs has to be meticulously planned to provide qualified teachers in both content and language and students with the required proficiency levels in English (Doiz et al., 2011). The core elements of EMI programs are often included in the definitions of EMI, namely “the use of English”, “academic subjects other than English itself”, and “L2 users of English” (Smit, 2023, p. 500). In addition to its core elements, (Smit, 2023) adds six more essential criteria for successful EMI programs. To start with, educational level refers to EMI programs’ flexibility at each stage of instruction, not just the tertiary level. EMI programs should not be considered exclusive to tertiary levels. Degree of coverage refers to EMI programs’ flexibility in how much of the program will be EMI-based. EMI programs can be designed around individual subjects, modules, or years, not just around the entirety of programs. Location refers to EMI programs’ flexibility outside the countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English, namely the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Even when set in these locations, EMI programs can exist on the condition that most attendees are

international students using English as a second or foreign language (Hüttner & Baker, 2023). Language policies refer to the EMI programs' nature of including two languages: English and the attendees' first language. Because of this nature, EMI programs should have explicit language-in-education policies, specify the medium of instruction, and determine language requirements and conditions for language support (Smit, 2023). Optionality refers to the idea that EMI programs should not be the only option for students to partake in but an alternative to education. Lastly, relation to language education refers to the idea that the language aims of an EMI program can be explicit, and language teaching can be supported in various forms based on the students' proficiency levels. This notion aims to make language education and content education go hand-in-hand. When the criteria for EMI programs are met, the programs can fulfil the reason for their existence. According to Richards and Pun (2023), the reasons include advancing language learning, supplying common language instruction in multilingual settings, bolstering economic competitiveness using a language proficient labor force, generating students that have global literacy and international communication skills, increasing international student profile of institutions, moving up in university rankings, boosting the institution's reputation, raising competitiveness between institutions, and expanding local and international communication.

2. Research Questions and Purpose

The study aims to explore and compare English language proficiency requirements, preparatory language programs, and language support mechanisms in four top-ranked EMI universities in Singapore and Malaysia. Specifically, the study investigates how these institutions design academic English language policies for undergraduate and postgraduate students who are local or international student admissions. The research aims to determine continual patterns and variations across institutions, which are UTP, UM, NUS, and NTU. By determining these patterns and parameters, the study seeks to understand how EMI universities in Southeast Asia administer language readiness and academic integration in multilingual and internationalized higher education settings. Therefore, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. *What are the English language proficiency requirements for undergraduate and postgraduate students at top EMI universities in Singapore and Malaysia?*
2. *How do these policies reflect broader institutional and national approaches to English-medium instruction in higher education?*
3. *What language support mechanisms are in place to assist students after enrollment in EMI programs at these universities?*

3. Literature Review

MI practices in Asia are among the most scrutinized and abundant programs around the globe. Foundations of EMI in Asian countries attribute admirable importance to English proficiency in their non-English societies (He & Chiang, 2018). In other words, improving the learning of English and developing intercultural communication skills often set the building blocks of EMI programs in Asia. Although this theoretical foundation is most agreed upon in Asian settings, studies that examined medium-of-instruction (MOI) policies in Asia, such as Hamid et al. (2013), who examined MOI policies in ten Asian countries, concluded that implementation is "fraught with difficulties and challenges" (p. 11). In addition to issues related to MOI policies, the disparity between aims and practice is also acknowledged in Asia (Hamid, 2013; Manh,

2012). Despite all these challenges in EMI theory and practice, many Asian countries strive to be the educational hub of their region and raise their university rankings in Asia and around the globe (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014). According to Bolton et al. (2023), in addition to these aims, the current drivers of EMI in Asian institutions include the importance of English as an international language in technology, science, business, studies around the globe, the eminence of US, UK, Canadian, and Australian institutions, and the prestige of EMI programs outside these jurisdictions. These jurisdictions include the Outer Circle societies discussed by Bolton and Botha (2020), involving Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Brunei, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Singapore in the South Asia Area. Within these societies, Singapore and Malaysia stand out for their EMI programs as they have a long-lasting history with EMI and as multicultural and multiethnic societies (Botha et al., 2023).

Ever since its foundation in 1965, Singapore has made its way into the strongest economies in Asia (Botha et al., 2023). From the 1970s and onward, English has been enforced by law to be the only medium of instruction in public education, including kindergarten to increase the city-state's position in the global knowledge economy (Bolton & Botha, 2017, p. 143). As a result, this city-state's nation-building economic agendas guided higher schools' and universities' policies (Sidhu et al., 2011). It is also widely agreed upon that Singapore's bilingual language policies have contributed significantly to establishing the city-state as the wealthiest, highest levels of English proficiency and most successful nation in Southeast Asia (Bolton, 2008; Bolton & Botha, 2020).

Currently, among the major universities in Singapore that provide EMI programs, two of the universities have made their way into the top 100 universities in Asia: NUS and NTU (Times Higher Education, 2025). The entry requirements for students who wish to partake in EMI programs in these universities converge on a common ground. What is not explicitly stated in these requirements and one that deviates from Macaro's (2018) definition of EMI is that English is now the *de facto* L1 of many young people in Singapore (Singstat, 2022). In this regard, the validity and reliability of language proficiency requirements for young people of EMI programs in Singapore remains unresolved.

On the other hand, Malaysia had English as MOI in schools until 1970, although MOI was changed to Bahasa Melayu (BM) in 1957, as there were not many local academics who spoke BM (Ali, 2013). In 1993, the Malaysian government reinstated EMI for tertiary science, engineering, and medical courses to facilitate the country's economic and technological advancements (Mohini, 2008). Soon after, Malaysia had hundreds of partnerships with Anglophone countries and became one of the first countries to internalize tertiary education in Asia (Gill & Kirkpatrick, 2014). However, English is currently not mandated by law as an MOI choice in HE; it is a *de facto* choice (Gill, 2014) to become the Southeast Asian center for international students (Rahman et al., 2018). At present, every private university has adopted EMI, but Malay continues to be the MOI in many public universities, most of which have adopted or adopting EMI (Ali & Hamid, 2018). Currently, among the major universities in Malaysia that provide EMI programs, two universities have made their way into the top 100 universities in Asia: UTP and UM (Times Higher Education, 2025). The entry requirements for students who wish to partake in EMI programs in these universities converge on a common ground. Within the body of research on EMI in Singapore, Malaysia, and Asia, there seems to be a lack of focus on the theoretical foundations of EMI programs. Thus, this study addresses

this gap by delving into EMI programs in four exemplary universities in Singapore and Malaysia.

4. Method

4.1. Research Design

Current study subsumes qualitative typology as the design of the research (Patton, 2002). Stemming from the study essential concern as two EMI varsities in Singapore and two EMI varsities in Malaya out of the top 100 Asian EMI universities according to Times Higher Education (2025), the type the approach was adopted to be a multi-sited typology study (Hannerz, 2003) that investigates the selected institutions following the Hannerz (2003) that “a multi-sited typology enables the systematic classification of cultural practices across geographically dispersed sites” (p. 203) along with qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019). Typology establishes a foundation for objective and measurable descriptions of EMI characteristics across various contexts, facilitates comparisons among different EMI forms, and identifies areas for additional investigation. The present typology also provides “an accessible metalanguage” (Lin, 2016: 4). Therefore, the phenomenon in the present study is the institutions’ admission requirements for English proficiency, how varsities retain language support, their requirements for preparation programs, if applicable, and the terminology used for English within these programs.

4.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Admission requirements regarding English proficiency and language that present in the websites of varsities support regarding preparatory classes when analyzing the website data. The data subsume various textual sources, such as related website pages, institutions’ guidelines, handbooks, and digital posters, which are all publicly accessible. These data were majorly gathered from varsities’ related websites and regarded web pages. Data were analyzed via qualitative content analysis (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018) and document analysis (Pauwels, 2012). The aim was to delve into the overt meaning of the website data through qualitative content analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) that “[a] manifest content deals with the visible and obvious components, while latent content deals with the relationship aspect and involves interpretation.” (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004, p.106). Moreover, document analysis is adopted for the data to be inspected and deciphered to evoke meaning, gain understanding, and create empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009).

5. Results

The data analysis is organized according to the three established categories pertaining to each varsities’ academic English language policies. The prerequisites for English language proficiency, preparatory courses, and language assistance are the primary topics. The policies of each institution are cited in order to address each of these themes.

5.1. Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP), Malaysia

5.1.1. English Proficiency Requirements

To pinpoint how English is implemented or addressed in administration guideline, official websites, and international student guidelines, other equivalent qualifications recognized by the Malaysian Government are consulted as the Universiti Teknologi Petronas undergraduate, graduate and foundation admission criteria documents referred in documents. According to

admission criteria for international students (Universiti Teknologi Petronas, 2023a) and admission criteria for local students (Universiti Teknologi Petronas, 2023b) are consulted.

(1) International Undergraduate Students

International students who are undergraduate students must fulfil the following requirements as undergraduate students:

- Minimum 2.75 GPA for engineering students .
- For UTP, students must be junior or senior year during exchange period.

The guidelines note that **undergraduate** students who are enrolled in **Engineering** department must fulfill at least:

- 5.0 in IELTS or equivalent,
- 40 in TOEFL IBT or equivalent,

In addition, **undergraduate** students who are enrolled in **Science** and **Business** departments must fulfill at least:

- 5.5 in IELTS or equivalent,
- 46 in TOEFL IBT or equivalent (Universiti Teknologi Petronas, 2023a).

(2) Local Undergraduate Students

Local students who are undergraduate students must fulfil the department related requirements, yet Malaysian students are not required for proving the proficiency level in English in programs.

(3) International Postgraduate Students

English proficiency requirements for **postgraduate** students (Universiti Teknologi Petronas, 2023b), international students who are postgraduate students must fulfil the following application requirements:

- Engineering Programmes - IELTS - 5.0, TOEFL iBT/Essentials - 500,
- PhD degree in Scientific Studies - PhD Degree in Administration Studies - Social Science & Humanities Studies require: IELTS – 6.0, TOEFL iBT/Essentials - 550,
- Information Technology / Information Systems Programmes - IELTS – 6.0, TOEFL iBT/Essentials- 550,

Nevertheless, this prerequisite is **relinquished** if:

- received B.A. / M.A. or other equivalent degrees from Malaysian sanctioned varsities whereas entire programs are completely executed in English or;
- a local citizen of an English-speaking country or;
- received education from English-speaking countries varsities.

(4) Local Postgraduate Students

English proficiency requirements for **postgraduate** students (Universiti Teknologi Petronas, 2023b), who are Malaysian -local- postgraduate must fulfil the following application requirements:

- Engineering Programmes - IELTS - 5.0, TOEFL iBT/Essentials - 500,
- PhD degree in Scientific Studies - PhD Degree in Administration Studies - Social Science & Humanities Studies require: IELTS – 6.0, TOEFL iBT/Essentials - 550,
- Knowledge Innovative / Knowledge Systems - IELTS – 6.0, TOEFL iBT/Essentials - 550,

Notwithstanding, this prerequisite is **relinquished** if:

- received B.A. / M.A. or other equivalent degrees from Malaysian sanctioned varsities whereas entire programs are completely executed in English or;
- a local citizen of an English-speaking country or;
- received education from English-speaking countries varsities.

(5) International Foundation Students

English proficiency requirements for **foundation** students (Universiti Teknologi Petronas, 2023c), who are Malaysian -local- students must fulfill merely a criteria which includes application of the program using the final examination semester results, and no English proficiency requirements are obligated for foundation students.

(6) Local Foundation Students

Local students who are **foundation** students must fulfil the department related requirements, yet Malaysian students are not required for proving the proficiency level in English in programs.

5.1.2. Language Support

Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP) coordinates discipline-specific English language bolster through its scholarly programs to guarantee that understudies create specialized and phonetic competencies. At the undergrad level, the college implants “Engineering English” modules inside the centre’s educational program, centring on industry-specific communication skills such as specialized report writing, equipment manual translation, and security convention documentation (Universiti Teknologi Petronas, 2023d). These specialized ESL components are especially emphasized in petroleum engineering and geoscience programs, where understudies analyze actual case ponders from Malaysia’s vitality sector. For postgraduate analysts, UTP offers obligatory thesis-writing workshops that address common challenges in scholastic English, counting writing, audit organizing about translation, diary article designing, and agreeing to worldwide distribution benchmarks (Universiti Teknologi Petronas, 2023d). Combining undergrad discipline-specific language preparation with graduate-level scholastic composing bolster, this two-tiered approach guarantees persistent dialect advancement adjusted with UTP’s industry-focused instructive reasoning. The workshops outstandingly consolidate peer-review sessions utilizing anonymized proposition drafts from past cohorts, giving down-to-earth illustrations of successful scholarly composing in STEM fields.

5.1.3. Preparatory Program

Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP) orders its English Three Program (ILEX) for understudies failing to meet the least English proficiency requirements (e.g., undergraduate candidates scoring below IELTS 5.0 or TOEFL iBT 42). This full-time preliminary course, spanning 6–12 weeks, targets basic academic competencies through modules about writing, listening, reading, speaking, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The curriculum

emphasizes problem-based learning, requiring understudies to deliver discipline-specific reports and introductions reflecting real-world industry scenarios. Practical ILEX completion is a prerequisite for degree enrollment, guaranteeing understudies accomplish the phonetic meticulousness required for UTP's English-medium coursework (Universiti Teknologi Petronas, 2023c).

Furthermore, the English Preparatory Module for IELTS at Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP) may be a 12-week intensive program to prepare international understudies for scholastic consideration. Starting each January semester, this organized course covers all IELTS test components with uncommon accentuation on scholastic perusing procedures, composing assignment techniques, tuning in comprehension methods, and talking test reenactments (Universiti Teknologi Petronas, 2020). Focused on prospective undergrad and coursework master's understudies requiring to meet UTP's English language entry prerequisites, this preliminary pathway combines rigorous test arrangement with a viable introduction to Malaysian scholarly life.

5.2. University of Malaya (UM)

5.2.1. English Proficiency Requirements

Competence in English is a fundamental prerequisite for scholastic success at the UM, ensuring all students possess the necessary language skills to engage with coursework, research, and university life. UM mandates standardized English proficiency test scores for undergraduate, postgraduate, and foundation admissions (University of Malaya, 2024a, 2024b). These requirements align with UM's commitment to maintaining academic rigour and facilitating effective communication in its English-medium programs. The university recognizes the diverse linguistic backgrounds of its student body and provides support mechanisms to help applicants achieve these benchmarks. This section outlines UM's standardized proficiency expectations, exemptions, and preparatory resources available to ensure students meet the language demands of their chosen disciplines.

(1) International Undergraduate Students

International students who are **undergraduate** students must fulfil the following requirements as undergraduate student as in the table 1:

Table 1. *English Proficiency Requirements of International Undergraduate Students*

English Proficiency Tests	Minimum Scores
MUET	4.0
IELTS (Academic)	6.0
TOEFL iBT (Centre-based)	60
TOEFL Essentials (Online)	8.5
Pearson Test of English (PTE) Academic	59
Cambridge English Qualifications & Tests (B1 Preliminary, B2 First, C1 Advanced, C2 Proficiency)	169

(2) Local Undergraduate Students

Local students who are **undergraduate** students must fulfil the following requirements as in the table 2:

Table 2. *English Proficiency Requirements of Local (Malaysian) Undergraduate Students*

English Proficiency Tests	Minimum Scores
MUET (Malaysian University English Test)	Band 4.0
IELTS Academic	6.0
TOEFL PBT	550
TOEFL CBT	213
TOEFL iBT	80
PTE Academic	42
Cambridge (FCE / CAE / CPE)	Grade C
GCE A-Level English	Grade C

(3) International Postgraduate Students

International postgraduate students enrolled in the Master's Degree program must fulfill English language proficiency requirements for admission. The English proficiency requirements at the University of Malaya for Malaysian postgraduate applicants vary significantly **by faculty**. This range highlights the **faculty-specific** nature of **admission standards**, given the scholastic or professional demands of the subject, several programs require greater levels of English ability. International postgraduate students must therefore cater to following criteria. as in table 3:

Table 3. *English Proficiency Requirements for International Postgraduate Students*

English Proficiency Tests	Minimum Scores	Notes
IELTS Academic	5.5 - 7.0	Minimum score required depends on the program.
TOEFL iBT	46 - 96	The required score varies across faculties; for instance, some master's programs accept as low as 46, while others require up to 96.
PTE Academic	51 - 65	The required score varies across faculties; for instance, some master's programs accept as low as 51, while others require up to 65.
Cambridge English	160 - 180	The required score varies across faculties; for instance, some master's programs accept as low as 160, while others require up to 180.

(4) Local Postgraduate Students

Local postgraduate students enrolled in Master's Degree programs must fulfil English language proficiency requirements for admission. The English proficiency requirements at the University of Malaya for Malaysian postgraduate applicants vary significantly **by faculty**. This range

highlights the **faculty-specific** nature of admission standards, given the scholastic or professional demands of the subject, several programs require greater levels of English ability. Local postgraduate students must therefore cater to following criteria. as in table 4:

Table 4. *English Proficiency Requirements for Local (Malaysian) Postgraduate Students*

English Proficiency Tests	Minimum Scores	Notes
MUET	Band 4.0 - Band 5.0	Minimum and maximum band scores required depends on the program.
IELTS (Academic)	5.5 - 7.0	Minimum score required depends on the program.
TOEFL iBT	46 - 96	The required score varies across faculties; for instance, some master's programs accept as low as 46, while others require up to 96.
PTE Academic	51 - 65	The required score varies across faculties; for instance, some master's programs accept as low as 51, while others require up to 65.
Cambridge English	160 - 180	The required score varies across faculties; for instance, some master's programs accept as low as 160, while others require up to 180.

(5) Foundation Students

SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia) Students require a higher English grade (B) compared to IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education), which is administered by Cambridge Assessment International Education, reflecting UM's emphasis on Bahasa Melayu proficiency for Malaysian nationals. In the absence of international proficiency tests (IELTS/TOEFL) for foundation students, UM remarks that the **school-based examinations** for assessing English proficiency for foundation program admissions are **prioritized**. As for the **foundation** students, the requirements that must be fulfilled are as in table 5:

Table 5. *English Proficiency Requirements for Foundation Students*

English Proficiency Tests	Minimum Scores	Notes
SPM	Grade B	Must be one of 5 required credits
IGCSE	Grade C	Minimum passing grade
Secondary School (Grade 11) or Equivalent	Grade B	Consistent across all equivalent qualifications

5.2.2. Language Support

UM provides a run in TESOL-focused courses fundamental to preparing future English language teachers. Among these courses are linguistic use instructional method and writing analysis, which prepare pre-service instructors with the theoretical foundation and viable procedures required for viable English language instruction. The grammar pedagogy course emphasizes the standards of teaching English grammar in communicative and learner-centred

settings, empowering future instructors to plan direction exercises that are academically sound and relevantly fitting. In the meantime, the writing examination course cultivates a more profound understanding of literary writings and their part in language teaching, advancing basic considering, social mindfulness, and language skills advancement. These courses are fundamental to UM's English language education program, reflecting its commitment to creating competent and intelligent TESOL experts (University of Malaya, 2024d).

5.2.3. Preparatory Program

(A) Centre for Foundation Studies in Science

At the UM, the Centre for Foundation Studies in Science (University of Malaya, 2024d) offers organized English language bolsters for understudies selected within the university's foundation programs. The English educational modules range one academic year and are separated into two particular stages. At the beginning of the semester, understudies centre on enhancing core language abilities specifically planned to prepare them for the Malaysian University English Test (MUET). The second semester shifts toward building students' academic communication through speaking practices and presentation skills. This approach guarantees that understudies not as it were meet university entry requirements but are too superior prepared to succeed in their academic journey (University of Malaya, 2025a).

(B) University of Malaya Centre for Continuing Education (UMCCed)

Beyond the foundation level, the University of Malaya also offers English preparatory classes through its Centre for Continuing Education (UMCCed), which serves a broader understudy populace counting recognition, undergrad, and postgraduate learners. The English Language Proficiency Programme (ELPP) is an intensive course organized in three levels: foundation, intermediate, and advanced. The program, comprising 192 hours over two months, centres on improving students' academic writing, speaking fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. UMCCed also gives MUET preparatory classes and intensive workshops, encouraging supporting understudies in assembly national language capability benchmarks required for academic progression (University of Malaya, 2025b; 2025c).

5.3. National University of Singapore (NUS)

5.3.1. English Proficiency Requirements

(1) Undergraduate Students

To benefit from an NUS education, international and local (Singaporean) It is required of applicants to have attained a certain degree of competency in English. Specific qualifications are required for additional English Language Test Scores and high school qualifications. Pertinent differentiation between local and international undergraduate students is not tackled (National University of Singapore, 2024a). Furthermore, English proficiency requirements for undergraduate students are as in table 6:

Table 6. *English Proficiency Requirements for Undergraduate Students*

English Proficiency Tests	Minimum Scores
IELTS (Academic)	6.5
TOEFL iBT	92
TOEFL PBT	580

TOEFL Home Edition	92
Cambridge English Test (C1 Advanced)	180
PTE Academic	62
MUET	200

(2) Postgraduate Students

Candidates whose first language is not English must illustrate their English proficiency using the TOEFL or IELTS test scores (National University of Singapore, 2024b). If a candidate wrapped up their degree program in an English-speaking nation with all instruction in English, they may put off the prerequisite. (National University of Singapore, 2024b). Moreover, English proficiency requirements for postgraduate students are as in table 7:

Table 7. English Proficiency Requirements for Postgraduate Students

English Proficiency Tests	Minimum Scores
TOEFL iBT	85
IELTS	6.0

5.3.2. Language Support

NUS implements English as the essential language of education in all undergraduate and postgraduate courses. To bolster understudies in creating their academic and proficient communication skills in English, NUS has established the Centre for English Language Communication (CELC). CELC offers a broad scale of administrations and programs in academic writing, oral presentation, critical thinking, and business communication, catering to both nearby and worldwide understudies. Whereas English remains the scholastic lingua franca, NUS offers discretionary language courses such as Chinese, Malay, Tamil, and French through its Centre for Language Studies. Thus, CELC reflects the university's commitment to phonetic differing qualities inside a multilingual society.

5.3.3. Preparatory Programs

The NUS Centre for English Language Communication (CELC) offers required or discretionary English courses for understudies who need to move forward their academic English skills. These incorporate **EAP** (English for Academic Purposes) classes, which focus on writing, talking, and critical thinking. Conceded understudies may be required to require these courses if their entrance qualifications do not meet NUS's English exception criteria. Further workshops, writing clinics, and one-on-one consultations are also accessible. Not at all like a few universities, NUS does not have a **full-year preparatory program** exclusively for English proficiency. Applicants must meet the least English requirements (e.g., IELTS 6.5 or TOEFL 92) at the time of application. There is no conditional admission based on future language improvement. Students whose English scores are below NUS requirements, may consider:

- Enrolling into **English proficiency** courses at **institutions** like the British Council Singapore or private academies (e.g., MDIS, LSBF) to retake IELTS/TOEFL.
- Achieving a diploma program at a Singaporean polytechnic (e.g., Singapore Polytechnic).

5.4. Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore

5.4.1. English Proficiency Requirements

(1) Undergraduate Students

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) requires applicants to demonstrate English proficiency if their prior education was not English. Accepted tests include IELTS, TOEFL iBT, SAT/ACT, and PTE Academic. Exemptions apply to students from English-medium education systems (e.g., India, the US, or the UK), and higher scores may be required for competitive programs like Medicine or Law. Table 8 below demonstrates a detailed breakdown of NTU's English language requirements to guide prospective undergraduate applicants.

Table 8. *English Proficiency Requirements for Undergraduate Students*

English Proficiency Tests	Minimum Scores
IELTS	6.0
TOEFL iBT	90
Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT)	1250
Pearson Test of English Academic (PTE Academic)	55
American College Testing (ACT)	30

(2) Postgraduate Students

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) receives a decentralized approach to English proficiency requirements for postgraduate admissions, differentiating from its standardized undergraduate criteria. Instead of imposing an overall minimum requirement, NTU empowers individual academic offices to establish their language proficiency standards based on each discipline's particular communicative requests and academic meticulousness. This faculty-specific framework recognizes that diverse areas of progressed study require varying levels of linguistic competence, with necessities carefully calibrated to guarantee students have the necessary English skills to flourish in their specific academic environment and proficient direction. The absence of a cover standard permits for more nuanced confirmation decisions that legitimately account for the particular language needs of each postgraduate program while maintaining NTU's commitment to academic fabulousness. Candidates must, in this manner, counsel their target department's particular rules to decide the appropriate English proficiency expectations. Table 9 below demonstrates a detailed breakdown of NTU's English language requirements to guide prospective postgraduate applicants.

Table 9. *English Proficiency Program-Specific Requirements for Postgraduate Students*

Programs	English Proficiency Tests & Minimum Scores	
	TOEFL iBT	IELTS
Nanyang Business School		
College of Computing and Data Science	100	6.5

School of Material Science & Engineering		
School of Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering	85	6.0
NTUpreneur	92	6.5
School of Biological Sciences		
School of Civil & Environmental Engineering	85	6.0
Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information	100	6.5
School of Electrical & Electronic Engineering	85	6.0
Nanyang Centre for Public Administration	88	6.5
School of Physical & Mathematical Sciences	85	6.0
School of Chemistry, Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology	85	6.0
School of Humanities	90	6.5
School of Art, Design & Media	90	6.5
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies	100	7.0
NTU Academy for Professional and Continuing Education	85	6.0

5.4.2. Language Support

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) conveys all its instruction in English over undergraduate and postgraduate courses, reflecting its status as a leading worldwide college in engineering, science, business, humanities, and social sciences. NTU's Language and Communication Centre (LCC) offers centre writing and discourse courses and discipline-specific communication modules to support understudies in reinforcing their scholastic and proficient communication. For worldwide postgraduate understudies, NTU utilizes Cambridge English Lingua skill testing to survey capability overwriting, speaking, listening, and reading, permitting tailored bolster programs based on individual needs. Furthermore, non-native English speakers must fulfil entry necessities through IELTS, TOEFL, PTE Academic, or comparable, based on their locale, as part of the admissions process. Generally, NTU's English bolster is comprehensive—spanning medium-of-instruction consistency, academic skills advancement, capability assessment, and customized mentoring.

5.4.3. Preparatory Program

NTU does not, as of now, offer a university-owned advanced academic preparation program. Instead, it formally suggests Columbia University's Advanced Academic Preparation as a favoured elective for students seeking organized pre-graduate or pre-professional preparation. This suggestion proposes an organization's support of Columbia's program's meticulousness, alignment with academic benchmarks, or potential articulation benefits. Such associations or referrals are common in higher instruction to address gaps in organization offerings, ensuring understudy access to high-quality assets. Encourage investigation seems to investigate the adequacy of this proposal and its effect on understudy results compared to in-house options.

(Nanyang Technological University, 2024c). In this case, C1 Advanced are only **compulsory** for applicants:

- Having been qualified by the PRC Gao Kao,
- the Taiwan General Scholastic Ability Test (GSAT),
- the South Korean College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT),
- or the High School Diploma (Ilbankye Kodung Hakkyo),
- with the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE),
- the Vietnam High School Graduation Certificate,
- Thailand Mathayom 6, Indonesian Ijazah SMA,
- or those who merely study English as a **second language** or **did not** study it in junior and senior high school.

6. Discussion

Concerning the first RQ (1) *What are the English language proficiency requirements for undergraduate and postgraduate students at top EMI universities in Singapore and Malaysia?* The findings support the conclusion that the IELTS and TOEFL iBT tests are the most widely accepted English proficiency tests for admission of both international and local students considering Malaysia and Singapore for postgraduate and undergraduate programs. However, local students (e.g. Malaysian students) must possess additional proficiency tests such as MUET, SPM, and GCE A-Level English. Additionally, postgraduate programs are prone to have higher or more variable score requirements when compared to undergraduate programs, considering the faculty requirements or program disciplines. However, the English proficiency standards for undergraduate students appear to follow a set ratio, such as 60-92 for the TOEFL iBT and 6.0-6.5 for the IELTS, which takes into account the program's disciplines.

Furthermore, undergraduate international students must submit their IELTS, TOEFL iBT, and PTE Academic scores. Concurrently, Malaysian undergraduates are also given the opportunity to have a MUET (Band 4) score or GCE A-Level English (Grade C) to apply to programs that are not operative for Singaporean students. For postgraduate students, NUS accepts only scores obtained from IELTS (6.0) and TOEFL iBT (85) for postgraduate programs. In contrast, two Malaysian universities accept a wider ratio (e.g., MUET, PTE, Cambridge English). Owing to program-specific criteria, postgraduate students must check faculty-specific requirements, as scores can range a wider ratio.

Nevertheless, NUS and NTU requiring merely TOEFL iBT, IELTS, and PTE Academic for local and international students as admission requirements can be considered as shreds of evidence that universities in Singapore have more tendency towards Standard English (STE), which is promoted mainly through inner circle varieties who are the native speakers of English (Kachru, 1985). This argument debunks Singapore's tendency to use standard English through Singapore's *Speak Good Movement (SGM)*, whose primary objective is to promote the application of standard English (STE) to improve oral interaction and mutual intelligibility within Singapore's multilingual society as Rubdy (2001) accentuated that it was categorically defined that Singaporeans corrupted the English in terms of both grammar and intelligibility by using Singlish (Singaporean English). In contrast, Malaysia initiated the *Dual Language*

Programme (Hamman, 2018) to give a few chosen schools the chance to teach STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects in English alongside the domestic curriculum (Lindholm-Leary, 2016) in Bahasa Malaysia (Li et al., 2016; Thomas & Collier, 2012) according to Airey's definition of "disciplinary literacy" as "the ability to participate in the communicative practices of the discipline appropriately" (Airey 2011, p.3). Since the DLP focuses on content mastery in STEM subjects via English, rather than strict grammatical accuracy, mirroring ELF's pragmatic approach (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2016), DLP prioritizes mutual intelligibility of ELF (Jenkins, 2015) and non-native speakers' practical application of English (Jenkins, 2015). As the DLP promotes teaching Mathematics, Science, and Technology in English, making it a content-based language teaching (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2016), it mirrors CBLT's principle that language is best acquired through meaningful subject learning (Met, 1999). Therefore, Malaysia can progress beyond standardized English by merging CBLT and ELF settings into classrooms.

Concerning the second RQ (2) *How do these policies reflect broader institutional and national approaches to English-medium instruction in higher education?*, according to outcomes, Malaysia and Singapore mostly required standardized proficiency tests as admission requirements and categorized admission requirements for local and international applicants with regarded tests within the lights of their national language policies, initiatives and movements such as Dual Language Programme, Speak Good Movement, National Language Policy etc. A final but significant point is that the third research question (3) *What language support mechanisms are in place to assist students after enrollment in EMI programs at these universities?*, leads us to Macaro (2022)'s Preparatory Year Model which has students taking a year or so of intensive English language training before allowing them to join an EMI course or program. This model sees English language proficiency as a prerequisite for EMI. Instantiations of the prerequisite vary between focusing on EAP and focusing English on a certain discipline or subject. Collaboration between English language and content teachers may be necessary for this paradigm.

Therefore, the outcome accentuates that all three universities, except NTU, offer preparatory classes as optional for those willing to advance their proficiency and compulsory for those unable to fulfil the minimum proficiency requirements to be admitted to programs they applied to. In this case, UTP initiated ILEX and English Preparatory Module for IELTS, UM launched the Centre for Foundation Studies and UMCCed programme, and NUS launched CELC for undergraduate students to receive English courses to advance their language skills. However, postgraduate students are not provided such courses regardless of their field of expertise, as most postgraduate admission requirements are higher than undergraduate admission requirements. In light of this, NTU does not offer preparatory classes as NTU follows a stricter approach to the admission requirements by having a higher score requirement and a smaller variety of accepted proficiency tests, along with its nature of admitting applicants only considering the program-specific requirements. This argument could be based on Macaro (2022)'s Pre-institutional Selection Model whereby applicants to an EMI course or program are pre-selected depending on their level of English ability. The model makes the assumption that teachers won't need to modify their lessons to accommodate students' varying skill levels and that students won't require much assistance with language while enrolled in the EMI program.

7. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The current study aimed to delve into and compare EMI policies, English language proficiency requirements, preparatory programs, and language support systems at four top-ranked universities in Singapore and Malaysia. Although the typology methodological approach allowed a scrutinized examination of institutional designs and policy directions, the study was constrained by various contextual and methodological limitations. First, the study benefited solely from institutional documentation and publicly available sources. These sources may not wholly reflect the realities of policy implementation, especially in settings where these sources are not strictly followed. Second, the study did not include data from students, teachers, or administrators in EMI contexts of Singapore and Malaysia, making how EMI is experienced and interpreted in those settings unknown. Third, due to changing national or regional EMI agendas, the policy landscape in these settings may be subject to change shortly. Considering these limitations, future research could benefit from including stakeholder perspectives, namely students, teachers, and administrators, through interviews or focus groups to gain a comprehensive and fuller grasp of EMI policies in practice. Furthermore, comparative studies that involve a wider range of universities across different tiers, regions, or policy contexts around the globe or Asia could augment typological categories and provide a deeper snapshot of EMI in the selected settings. Lastly, further research could examine the outcome and effectiveness of language proficiency requirements and support services by investigating students' academic development and preparedness in EMI programs. □ □

8. Conclusion

This study examined the English language proficiency requirements, preparatory programs, and language support mechanisms in four leading EMI universities in Singapore and Malaysia. The study reveals that IELTS and TOEFL iBT are the most widely accepted proficiency tests across institutions with relatively standardized scores (6.0 - 6.5 for IELTS and 60-92 for TOEFL iBT) for undergraduate proficiency requirements. In addition to these examinations, Malaysia adopts a wide array of local and international tests such as MUET, PTE, and Cambridge English, unlike Singapore, which is relatively strict in its proficiency requirements. For postgraduate admissions in EMI programs at three of the four universities, namely UM, UTP, and NTU, there are higher or more varied entry requirements that are program- or faculty-specific. In contrast, the remaining university, NUS, upholds more standardized criteria for postgraduate students, emphasizing on pre-admission linguistic readiness. Language policies, on the other hand, differ in terms of broader national orientations. Singaporean universities endorse Standard English models aligned with the Speak Good English Movement, prioritizing global intelligibility and rigorous entry criteria. On the contrary, Malaysian universities endorse English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) models aligned with the Dual Language Programme, prioritizing content learning in English. Last but not least, language support strategies differ to an extent between Singapore and Malaysia. Singaporean universities concentrate more on pre-entry proficiency with limited support post-enrollment, while Malaysian universities concentrate more on structured preparatory and academic English programs for undergraduate and postgraduate students. In conclusion, these typologies accentuate how EMI policy interacts with national identity, pedagogical preferences, and institutional autonomy.

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