ПРОБЛЕМИ І ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ МОВНОЇ ПІДГОТОВКИ ІНОЗЕМНИХ СТУДЕНТІВ У ЗАКЛАДАХ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ

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Проблеми і перспективи мовної підготовки іноземних студентів у закладах вищої освіти : зб. наук. ст. за матеріалами XXI Міжнар. наук.-практ. конф. (29 жовтня 2026 р.). – Харків : ХНАДУ, 2026. – 414 с.

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English proficiency certificates as an entrance test for international students studying in the medium of English

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Internationalization of higher education is a hallmark of modern tertiary-level education and is growing globally. According to the PROJECT ATLAS release, in 2022 the total number of international students increased by 8 % compared with the previous year, reaching 6.9 million [11].

English-taught programs (ETPs) play a significant role in the internationalization of universities: 183,262 on-campus bachelor's and master's English-taught programs were identified in 2021. Although the Big Four remain the major suppliers of ETPs, in 2024 one in five ETPs (40,786) were delivered in non-Anglophone countries [8, p.5]; this number has increased by 48 % since 2019 [8, p.10].

Obviously, in the competition that is inevitable in conditions of increased supply, a higher quality of education offered by universities and thus higher demand for the graduates in the labor market will give 'a pole position' to higher education institutions (HEIs). Professional education quality is determined by many factors, and in the ETP context one of the leading roles is played by the level of students' English language proficiency.

English language proficiency assessment is a mandatory procedure for applicants who have chosen an ETP and can be accomplished in several ways. National students submit the results of school-leaving exams; however, international students are required to demonstrate their English proficiency in one of the following ways: by submitting a certificate of a standardized English test (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS) or by passing an exam. In some countries applicants can pass a national English proficiency exam (ITACE in Belgium), and/or a national subject area-oriented English proficiency exam (CENT-S, IMAT in Italy). In-house exams are also a common practice.

Although entry requirements differ, international certificates of English proficiency are commonly accepted to prove the future student's language proficiency. Our work aims to assess the advantages and disadvantages of using results of international standardized English language exams to confirm the level of English proficiency required for learning in the medium of English.

The policies regarding the international certificates that can be submitted vary from university to university, ranging from almost all available international exams (e.g., Wroclaw Medical University accepts 26 certificates from 9 test providers) to a very restricted number (e.g., Rijksuniversiteit Groningen accepts IELTS academic, TOEFL iBM and Cambridge English Qualifications Advanced (CAE) C1 and Advanced Proficiency (CPE) C2). In the US, the home country of TOEFL, 32 different English proficiency tests are used by tertiary-level HEIs; of them the most accepted are TOEFL iBT, IELTS Academic, Duolingo English Test, and Pearson Test of English Academic [3].

The advantages of standardized English proficiency tests are obvious: global recognition; official test centers all over the world; examination sessions held regularly throughout the year; testing all linguistic skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) in separate sections. These tests are valid, fair, in demand, and reliable; their quality is assured by scientific research in applied linguistics and language assessment. Despite of the overall benefits, standardized English proficiency tests

often face criticism. As each test applies its own scoring system, the scores are not always compatible. Although the test providers align the scores to the CEFR, it is argued, that CEFR linking provides a reference point, but without the assumption of exact equivalence between all tests at the same level [4, p. 13].

The affordability of these tests (especially in low-income countries) is limited due to high cost, and, in addition, preparation for these tests requires access to costly resources, such as private tutoring or preparation courses and specialized course books [13]. Test centers are mainly located in big cities, which decreases their availability for residents of remote areas.

Cultural implications of standardized language tests (domination of Western cultural norms), which may not match the cultural backgrounds of test-takers, thus making the test results less accurate, are often a concern [12; 13]. Subject area-specific texts included in the test can also influence the test results if the test takers are not familiar with this subject [12].

Olaleye, V. G. (2024) points to an existing gap between the current English proficiency testing systems, especially TOEFL and IELTS, and Global Englishes [10, p.5]; the monolingual bias in TOEFL and IELTS also extends to being a monocultural bias [10, p. 9].

A significant concern is “teaching to the test”, which confines the curriculum to the skills that are measured in the exam [13].

In the context of ETPs, the use of international standardized test certificates is convenient for universities, as it allows avoiding allocating additional resources to the design and conduct of entrance tests as well as the maintenance of examination infrastructure.

The use of standardized test scores ensures streaming of all students based on English language proficiency and establishes equality among different student groups. However, their effectiveness as a tool for admission in ETPs at non-Anglophone Universities is not yet well understood [5].

Many researchers note that high general English test scores are not sufficient to ensure students' academic performance. It is assumed that language proficiency level predicts linguistic challenges of EMI students rather than their academic success. A statistically significant relationship between English language proficiency and language-related challenges was found in Japanese and Turkish EMI contexts [1; 7].

Jenkins, J., & Leung, C. (2019) argued against using standardized English proficiency tests in the conditions of English as a lingua franca, as they are far from real communication practices within ETPs, and suggested orienting the admission tests toward disciplinary and professional contexts [6].

To support this assumption, a statistically significant relationship between students' ESP proficiency (Business English) and their course (Marketing) scores was found by Xie, W., & Curle, S. (2022), which may suggest the relevance of subject-oriented English proficiency tests [14].

The work of Bo, W.V. et al. (2022), which investigated the relationship between university students' previous academic experience, English language proficiency, and their current academic performance of 514 Singaporean students demonstrated that English proficiency significantly predicted students' current academic achievement for the students whose prior academic performances were on the same level. Their study also showed that the association between proficiency and GPA was influenced by the discipline [2].

The role of academic literacies in the academic performance of EMI students is emphasized. McKinley, J. (2026) believes that the readiness to study in the medium of English depends less on general proficiency and more on academic literacy, that is, the "ability to think, read, and write within disciplinary conventions". The students who passed the international exams still have challenges with reading, critical writing, taking part in discussions. He argues that diagnostic tests measuring communication skills in the subject area can more accurately predict academic performance and advocates adopting diagnostic tools that assess how students use their linguistic skills in the chosen subject area. He supposes that if academic literacy

gets due attention in entrance test, the HEIs will have a clearer idea of the students' performance and can make EMI "a fairer, more inclusive model of higher education" [9].

It can be concluded that, although standardized tests are globally recognized as a tool for measuring English proficiency and are commonly required for enrollment as an EMI student, their ability to predict the academic success of EMI students has not been investigated in detail. A substantial part of success depends on the students' performance at the previous level of education, basic knowledge of the subject area, and readiness for university education (academic literacies). As standardized English proficiency tests hardly measure these, in-house entrance English proficiency tests may better serve the task of EMI student selection. Investigations into the efficacy of standardized English proficiency tests created and run by HEIs with an eye to the subject area and the entrant cohort can be reasonable.

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Cadets’ integration into higher education: challenges, crises and adaptive strategies

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Adaptation under martial law is most frequently studied through the lens of civilian students while military cadets are mentioned only in passing in broader discussions about education during wartime. A cadet exists within two systems simultaneously. On one hand, they are a student – attending lectures, completing assignments and taking exams. On the other hand, they are a future officer bound by military regulations, participating in formations and living according to a strict daily