



Characteristics of English and Mother Tongue Languages

It is important to note that EL and the three MTLs have different scripts and their own unique characteristics as a language. The main characteristics of each language are:

Language	Characteristics of the Language in Print
English Language (Standard Singapore English)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Known as an alphabetic language • Letters form words and words make up phrases and sentences • Read from left to right
Chinese Language (Mandarin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Known as a morphographic language where characters represent syllables that hold meaning • Each character made up of different components that give clues to how it is pronounced and its meaning • Individual characters have meaning and can be combined to form words (e.g., bookshelf), phrases and sentences • Can be read from top to bottom, left to right; at times, can be read from right to left
Malay Language (Bahasa Melayu)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Known as an alphabetic language • Letters form words and words make up phrases and sentences • Has different vowel sounds from the English Language • Has different syntax and grammatical structures from the English Language • Read from left to right
Tamil Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tamil is alphasyllabary that represents sounds at the syllable level • Letters form words and words make up phrases and sentences • Different vocabulary, syntax and grammatical structures for spoken Tamil and written Tamil • Read from left to right