

# Developing Global Citizenship Competencies Through English Integration in Geography Education at Vietnamese High Schools

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**Abstract:** In the context of globalization and digital transformation, global citizenship education has become an essential objective of contemporary education systems. Simultaneously, the increasing emphasis on English as a second language in Vietnamese schools requires innovative pedagogical approaches that integrate language learning across disciplines. This study examines the role of English integration in Geography education in fostering global citizenship competencies among high school students in Vietnam. Drawing upon the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) framework and global competence theories proposed by UNESCO and OECD, the study explores how bilingual learning environments can enhance students' intercultural communication, critical thinking, global awareness, and academic language proficiency. A mixed-methods approach was employed, including questionnaire surveys with 126 high school students and semi-structured interviews with 12 Geography teachers from three public high schools in northern Vietnam. The findings indicate that integrating English into Geography lessons increases students' motivation, improves access to international learning resources, and supports the development of global perspectives. However, several challenges remain, including uneven English proficiency, limited bilingual teaching materials, and insufficient teacher training in CLIL pedagogy. The study suggests that effective integration requires institutional support, professional development programs, and the development of localized bilingual resources suitable for Vietnamese educational contexts. The findings contribute to current discussions on interdisciplinary education, global competence, and bilingual instruction in secondary education.

**Keywords:** Global citizens, English language integration, Geography as a subject, General education, Second languages, Bilingual education.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization, digital transformation, and international educational cooperation have significantly reshaped the goals of contemporary education systems. In the twenty-first century, schools are expected not only to provide disciplinary knowledge but also to prepare students to participate effectively in an increasingly interconnected world. As a result, the concept of global citizenship competence has emerged as a central educational objective in many countries (UNESCO, 2015).

Global citizenship competence refers to an individual's ability to understand global issues, communicate across cultures, respect diversity, and act responsibly toward local and global communities (OECD, 2018). These competencies are closely associated with foreign language proficiency, intercultural communication, critical thinking, and digital literacy. In many educational contexts, English plays a particularly important role because it functions as an international language of academic communication, science, technology, and global collaboration.

In Vietnam, educational reforms have increasingly emphasized the development of students' foreign language competence and international integration skills. Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW on comprehensive educational reform highlights the importance of enhancing foreign language education to meet the demands of globalization. In parallel, the Ministry of Education and Training has promoted the orientation of gradually transforming English into a second language in schools.

Despite these policy orientations, English learning in Vietnamese schools is still largely confined to English language classrooms. Opportunities for students to use English meaningfully in authentic academic contexts remain relatively limited. Consequently, many students demonstrate grammatical knowledge but encounter difficulties when applying English in interdisciplinary learning or real-life communication.

One promising approach to addressing this issue is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which integrates subject knowledge and language learning simultaneously (Coyle et al., 2010). Through CLIL, students use English as a medium for exploring academic content rather than studying language in isolation. Among school subjects, Geography possesses strong potential for CLIL implementation because it addresses global issues such as climate change, sustainability, migration, urbanization, and environmental challenges.

In addition, Geography education inherently encourages students to examine relationships between people, places, environments, and global systems. These characteristics make Geography particularly suitable for fostering global citizenship awareness and intercultural understanding. International educational resources related to Geography—including digital maps, climate databases, scientific documentaries, and global reports—are also predominantly available in English.

Although previous studies have explored CLIL and global competence in various educational contexts, there remains limited research focusing specifically on English integration in Geography education within Vietnamese high schools. Moreover, few studies have examined how integrated bilingual Geography instruction contributes to the development of global citizenship competencies among Vietnamese students.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the role of English integration in Geography education in promoting global citizenship competencies among high school students in Vietnam. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does English integration in Geography education contribute to the development of global citizenship competencies among Vietnamese high school students?
2. What challenges do teachers and students encounter during the implementation of integrated bilingual Geography instruction?
3. What pedagogical strategies can enhance the effectiveness of English-integrated Geography teaching in Vietnamese schools?

The study contributes to current discussions on bilingual education, CLIL pedagogy, and interdisciplinary approaches to global competence development in secondary education.

### ***Global Citizenship Education***

Global citizenship education (GCED) has become an important educational framework in response to globalization and increasing intercultural interactions. UNESCO (2015) defines global citizenship education as a form of education that empowers learners to engage actively and responsibly in both local and global communities.

According to OECD (2018), global competence includes the capacity to examine local and global issues, appreciate different perspectives, communicate effectively across cultures, and take responsible action toward sustainable development. These competencies require students to develop not only cognitive understanding but also communication skills, empathy, and intercultural awareness.

Scholars such as Boix Mansilla and Jackson (2011) argue that global competence is best developed through interdisciplinary learning environments where students engage with authentic global issues and diverse cultural perspectives.

### **Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)**

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) refers to an educational approach in which subjects are taught through a foreign language with dual-focused aims: learning content and learning language simultaneously (Coyle et al., 2010). The CLIL framework is commonly associated with the 4Cs model, including Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture. These dimensions emphasize that language learning should occur through meaningful cognitive engagement and intercultural interaction.

Previous research indicates that CLIL can improve students' motivation, academic vocabulary acquisition, communication skills, and intercultural competence (Mehisto et al., 2008). However, successful implementation often depends on teacher preparedness, institutional support, and access to bilingual learning materials.

### **Geography Education and Global Competence**

Geography education plays a crucial role in helping students understand global interdependence and environmental sustainability. Lambert and Morgan (2010) suggest that Geography enables students to critically examine social, economic, and environmental processes from both local and global perspectives.

Geography classrooms also provide opportunities for students to engage with authentic international resources, including climate reports, digital mapping tools, and scientific data sets. Such learning experiences can support the development of critical thinking and global awareness.

Nevertheless, research on English-integrated Geography education in Vietnam remains relatively limited, particularly regarding its impact on global citizenship competencies.

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **2.1. Research Design**

This study employed a mixed-methods research design combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the role of English integration in Geography education in developing global citizenship competencies among Vietnamese high school students. The mixed-methods approach was selected because it enables researchers to obtain both measurable statistical patterns and in-depth contextual insights regarding classroom practices and educational experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The quantitative component focused on examining students' perceptions of English-integrated Geography lessons, particularly regarding motivation, language development, intercultural awareness, and global competence. Meanwhile, the qualitative component explored teachers' experiences, pedagogical strategies, and challenges related to implementing bilingual Geography instruction in Vietnamese secondary schools.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data allowed for triangulation, thereby increasing the reliability and validity of the findings. According to Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007), mixed-methods research provides a more comprehensive understanding of educational phenomena because it combines numerical analysis with participants' lived experiences.

### **2.2. Research Context and Participants**

*The study was conducted during the 2025–2026 academic year in three public high schools located in northern Vietnam. These schools were selected purposively because they had previously implemented innovative teaching approaches, digital learning activities, and interdisciplinary educational projects.*

*A total of 126 students and 12 Geography teachers participated in the study.*

**Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Grade 10 students	42	Participated in bilingual Geography activities
Grade 11 students	44	Experienced CLIL-based Geography lessons
Grade 12 students	40	Participated in project-based bilingual learning
Geography teachers	12	Teaching experience ranging from 5 to 18 years

Among the participating teachers, seven held master's degrees in Geography education, while five held bachelor's degrees. Most teachers reported having basic to intermediate English proficiency; however, only three teachers had previously attended professional training workshops related to CLIL or bilingual instruction.

The participating students represented different academic achievement levels and English proficiency backgrounds. This diversity provided a broader understanding of how English-integrated Geography instruction functions across varying learner contexts.

### **2.3. Research Instruments**

To ensure methodological rigor, multiple data collection instruments were employed, including questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis.

#### *Student Questionnaire*

A structured questionnaire was administered to 126 students to examine their perceptions of English-integrated Geography instruction. The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

Section A collected demographic information, including grade level and self-reported English proficiency.

Section B included 20 Likert-scale items measuring students' perceptions regarding:

learning motivation,  
vocabulary development,  
intercultural awareness,  
classroom engagement,  
confidence in using English,  
understanding of global issues.

The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale ranging from:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

Prior to formal implementation, the questionnaire was piloted with 20 students from a different school to evaluate clarity and reliability. Minor revisions were made to improve wording and item comprehension. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.87, which indicated acceptable reliability for educational research purposes (Taber, 2018).

#### *Semi-Structured Teacher Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 Geography teachers to explore their experiences with bilingual instruction and perceptions of English integration in Geography education. Each interview lasted approximately 35–45 minutes and was conducted in Vietnamese to ensure participants could express their ideas naturally and comprehensively. Interview questions focused on: teaching strategies, perceptions of CLIL implementation, classroom challenges, student engagement, resource availability, professional development needs.

The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed for thematic analysis. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they provide flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences while still maintaining consistency across interview topics (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

#### *Classroom Observations*

To obtain direct insights into classroom practices, six Geography lessons were observed across the participating schools. The observations focused on: teacher-student interaction, use of English during instruction, integration of international learning materials, student participation, collaborative learning activities, classroom atmosphere.

Observation notes were recorded using an observation checklist adapted from CLIL classroom frameworks proposed by Mehisto et al. (2008). Classroom observation provided additional contextual data that complemented questionnaire and interview findings.

### *Document Analysis*

The study also analyzed: lesson plans, teaching materials, bilingual worksheets, PowerPoint presentations, project-based learning products.

The purpose of document analysis was to examine how English integration was embedded into Geography instruction and how global issues were presented in classroom materials. Document analysis contributed to data triangulation and strengthened the overall validity of the study.

#### **2.4. Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection was conducted over a three-month period from September to November 2025. The procedures were organized into four stages:

##### Stage 1: Institutional Permission

Formal approval was obtained from school administrators prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and confidentiality was guaranteed.

##### Stage 2: Questionnaire Administration

Student questionnaires were distributed during Geography lessons and completed within approximately 20 minutes.

##### Stage 3: Classroom Observations

The researcher observed six bilingual Geography lessons involving topics such as: climate change, sustainable development, renewable energy, globalization, population issues.

##### Stage 4: Teacher Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted after classroom observations to allow teachers to reflect on observed lessons and instructional experiences.

#### **2.5. Data Analysis**

Quantitative data obtained from student questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including: frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations.

The statistical analysis aimed to identify overall trends in students' perceptions of English-integrated Geography instruction.

Qualitative data from interviews and classroom observations were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework:

1. familiarization with data,
2. generating initial codes,
3. searching for themes,
4. reviewing themes,
5. defining themes,
6. producing the report.

Thematic analysis enabled the researcher to identify recurring patterns related to: pedagogical strategies, global competence development, student engagement, implementation challenges.

To enhance trustworthiness, member checking was conducted by sharing interview summaries with participating teachers for confirmation and clarification.

#### **2.6. Ethical Considerations**

This study followed ethical principles for educational research. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were informed about the objectives and procedures of the study prior to data collection.

Students and teachers were assured that:

their identities would remain confidential,  
participation would not affect academic evaluation,  
they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Pseudonyms were used in reporting interview excerpts to protect participants' privacy.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. Students' Perceptions of English-Integrated Geography Instruction

The quantitative findings revealed that most students expressed positive attitudes toward the integration of English into Geography lessons. Students generally perceived bilingual Geography instruction as more engaging, interactive, and relevant to real-world global issues compared to traditional monolingual lessons.

**Table 2: Students' Perceptions of English-Integrated Geography Lessons**

Statements	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
English-integrated lessons increase learning motivation	82.5	11.1	6.4
Geography lessons help improve English vocabulary	87.3	8.7	4.0
International learning materials make lessons more interesting	90.5	5.5	4.0
Bilingual activities improve global awareness	84.1	10.3	5.6
Students feel more confident communicating in English	63.5	24.6	11.9

The data indicate that bilingual Geography instruction positively influenced students' learning motivation and engagement. More than 80% of participants agreed that integrating English into Geography lessons made classroom activities more meaningful and dynamic. Students reported that the use of international videos, maps, and infographics created a more authentic learning environment and increased their interest in global topics. These findings are consistent with previous CLIL studies suggesting that content-based language learning enhances student motivation and classroom participation (Coyle et al., 2010; Mehisto et al., 2008). Unlike traditional language learning approaches that often emphasize grammar exercises and isolated vocabulary memorization, bilingual Geography lessons allowed students to use English in meaningful academic contexts. Several students also stated that learning Geography through partial English exposure reduced their fear of making language mistakes because communication was focused more on expressing ideas than grammatical accuracy. This observation aligns with Lightbown and Spada's (2013) argument that language acquisition becomes more effective when learners engage in authentic communication tasks.

In addition, students appeared particularly motivated when discussing globally relevant topics such as climate change, renewable energy, and environmental sustainability. These themes enabled learners to connect classroom knowledge with real-world issues, thereby strengthening both cognitive engagement and global awareness.

#### 3.2. Development of Global Citizenship Competencies

One significant finding of the study was the contribution of English-integrated Geography instruction to the development of global citizenship competencies.

Classroom observations showed that students became more aware of international issues and demonstrated stronger interest in global events after participating in bilingual Geography activities. During group discussions and project-based tasks, students frequently connected local environmental challenges in Vietnam with broader global concerns such as rising sea levels, air pollution, and resource depletion.

For example, in a Grade 11 lesson on climate change, students compared the impacts of flooding in the Mekong Delta with environmental problems occurring in other countries. Through English-supported learning materials, students accessed information from international organizations such as UNESCO, NASA, and National Geographic. This exposure helped students recognize the interconnected nature of environmental and social issues across different regions of the world.

The findings suggest that English integration created opportunities for students to engage directly with global knowledge sources rather than relying solely on translated textbooks. As a result, learners developed stronger intercultural awareness and broader global perspectives.

These findings support UNESCO's (2015) view that global citizenship education should encourage learners to critically examine global challenges and participate actively in sustainable development efforts.

Furthermore, students demonstrated improvement in several dimensions of global competence identified by OECD (2018), including: understanding global issues, appreciating multiple perspectives, intercultural communication, responsible participation in society.

During classroom discussions, students increasingly used expressions such as: global warming, environmental protection, renewable energy, sustainable development.

Although students' English proficiency varied, many participants were able to communicate basic ideas about international issues using simple academic vocabulary and collaborative learning strategies.

Teacher interviews also revealed that bilingual Geography instruction encouraged students to become more curious about international news and global trends. One teacher commented: "Students started asking more questions about environmental problems in other countries after using English materials in Geography lessons. They became more interested in comparing Vietnam with the rest of the world."

This finding indicates that English-integrated Geography instruction may support not only language acquisition but also intellectual curiosity and global-minded thinking.

### **3.3. The Role of International Learning Materials in Geography Education**

Another important finding concerns the role of international learning resources in promoting both language learning and global competence development.

Teachers frequently used: digital maps, satellite images, climate reports, short documentaries, online infographics, interactive geography platforms.

Most of these resources were originally produced in English by international organizations and educational institutions.

Students reported that visual materials significantly improved comprehension, particularly when English vocabulary was accompanied by images, diagrams, or geographical data. Visual scaffolding reduced language barriers and helped students understand complex concepts more effectively.

Classroom observations demonstrated that students were more actively engaged during lessons involving multimedia resources than during textbook-based instruction. Group discussions became more collaborative, and students showed greater willingness to participate in English-supported activities.

These findings correspond with Mayer's (2009) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which emphasizes that visual and verbal information processed together can improve comprehension and retention.

Moreover, the use of authentic international materials exposed students to real-world academic language rather than simplified textbook English. This exposure is particularly important in preparing students for future participation in global academic and professional environments.

However, teachers also noted that selecting appropriate materials required careful adaptation. Some international resources contained vocabulary and cultural references beyond students' language proficiency levels. Therefore, teachers often simplified texts, added bilingual explanations, or designed guided tasks to support comprehension.

### **3.4. Challenges in Implementing English-Integrated Geography Instruction**

Despite the positive findings, the study identified several challenges affecting the implementation of bilingual Geography education in Vietnamese high schools.

#### *Uneven English Proficiency among Students*

The most frequently reported challenge was the considerable variation in students' English proficiency levels. Teachers explained that while some students could participate confidently in bilingual activities, others struggled to understand basic instructions or academic vocabulary.

This disparity created difficulties in classroom management and lesson pacing. Teachers often needed to balance content delivery with additional language support, which increased instructional complexity.

Several teachers expressed concern that weaker students might become passive or dependent on peers during collaborative tasks. Consequently, differentiated instruction and scaffolding strategies were considered essential for maintaining inclusive participation.

#### *Limited Teacher Preparation for CLIL Instruction*

Another major challenge involved insufficient teacher preparation for CLIL-based pedagogy.

Although most participating teachers supported the idea of bilingual education, many reported lacking confidence in: academic English communication, bilingual lesson planning, language scaffolding techniques, integrated assessment methods.

Only three teachers had previously attended formal professional development programs related to CLIL or bilingual instruction.

These findings align with previous studies suggesting that teacher readiness remains one of the most significant barriers to successful CLIL implementation (Mehisto et al., 2008).

Several teachers also emphasized that preparing bilingual lessons required significantly more time than traditional lessons due to the need to: select suitable materials, adapt language complexity, design interactive activities, prepare visual supports.

#### *Lack of Localized Bilingual Teaching Resources*

Teachers additionally reported limited access to localized bilingual Geography materials appropriate for Vietnamese classrooms.

Although numerous international resources are available online, many are designed for native or advanced English-speaking learners. As a result, teachers frequently needed to modify content to match students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

This finding suggests the necessity of developing localized bilingual teaching materials aligned with the Vietnamese national curriculum while maintaining international perspectives.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study indicate that integrating English into Geography education can effectively contribute to the development of global citizenship competencies among Vietnamese high school students.

First, the results confirm the pedagogical value of CLIL in creating meaningful language-learning environments. Rather than learning English through isolated grammar exercises, students used language as a tool for exploring authentic global issues. This supports Coyle et al.'s (2010) argument that language acquisition becomes more effective when embedded within cognitively engaging academic content.

Second, Geography appears particularly suitable for global citizenship education because of its interdisciplinary and globally oriented nature. Topics such as climate change, migration, sustainability, and urbanization naturally encourage students to examine international interdependence and social responsibility.

Third, the findings demonstrate that global competence development is closely connected to access to international knowledge resources. Through English-integrated instruction, students became more capable of engaging with global information networks and intercultural perspectives.

However, the study also highlights the importance of contextual adaptation. While bilingual instruction offers significant educational benefits, implementation should consider students' language readiness, teacher capacity, and institutional support systems.

These findings suggest that successful integration requires gradual implementation, teacher professional development, and sustained investment in bilingual educational resources.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

This study investigated the role of English integration in Geography education in fostering global citizenship competencies among Vietnamese high school students within the context of educational globalization and the growing emphasis on English as a second language in schools. Drawing upon the CLIL framework and theories of global competence, the study examined how bilingual Geography instruction contributes to students' language development, intercultural awareness, and engagement with global issues.

The findings indicate that integrating English into Geography lessons can positively influence students' learning motivation, academic engagement, and awareness of international issues. Through exposure to authentic learning materials such as digital maps, climate reports, documentaries, and global data sources, students were able to connect local realities with broader global challenges. In addition, bilingual learning activities created

opportunities for students to develop academic vocabulary, communication skills, and intercultural understanding within meaningful educational contexts.

The study also highlights the important role of Geography as a subject capable of promoting global citizenship education. Because Geography addresses themes such as environmental sustainability, climate change, globalization, population dynamics, and resource management, it naturally encourages students to think critically about global interdependence and social responsibility. These findings are consistent with UNESCO's (2015) argument that global citizenship education should empower learners to participate actively in addressing global challenges and promoting sustainable development.

At the same time, the research revealed several implementation challenges, including unequal English proficiency among students, limited teacher preparation for bilingual instruction, and insufficient localized teaching resources. Although teachers generally expressed positive attitudes toward English integration, many participants reported needing additional professional development in CLIL pedagogy, classroom scaffolding techniques, and bilingual assessment strategies. These findings correspond with previous research emphasizing that teacher readiness and institutional support are critical factors in successful CLIL implementation (Coyle et al., 2010; Mehisto et al., 2008).

From a pedagogical perspective, the study suggests that English integration should not aim to replace content learning with language instruction. Instead, English should function as a supportive academic tool that enables students to access international knowledge, communicate ideas, and participate in interdisciplinary learning environments. Gradual implementation, differentiated instruction, and contextual adaptation are therefore essential for ensuring inclusive and sustainable bilingual education practices.

Furthermore, the findings imply that educational policymakers and school leaders should invest in: teacher professional development programs, bilingual curriculum design, digital learning infrastructure, localized CLIL teaching materials, interdisciplinary collaboration between English and subject teachers. Such support systems are necessary for expanding bilingual learning opportunities in Vietnamese secondary education.

Overall, this study contributes to ongoing discussions concerning bilingual education, CLIL pedagogy, and global citizenship development in Southeast Asian educational contexts. The findings demonstrate that English-integrated Geography instruction has considerable potential to support both language acquisition and the development of globally competent learners prepared for participation in an increasingly interconnected world. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted in only three high schools in northern Vietnam and involved a relatively small sample size. Future research may therefore expand the geographical scope, include longitudinal data, or examine comparative outcomes across different school contexts and academic subjects.

Despite these limitations, the present study provides practical and theoretical insights into the integration of English in Geography education and highlights its potential contribution to educational innovation and internationalization in Vietnam.

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