



Improving bilingual students' English through teaching Cambridge Global Perspectives™



Teacher Josiah Ching Yi-Xiang explains how Cambridge Global Perspectives allows students at Nguyen Sieu School to develop their English proficiency while they build a whole range of other valuable transferable skills, all through bilingual education.

Nguyen Sieu School in Hanoi, one of the pioneers of Cambridge education in Vietnam, offers the Vietnamese National Curriculum as well as a continually expanding suite of Cambridge programmes and qualifications, including Cambridge Global Perspectives.

Cambridge Global Perspectives has been taught at Nguyen Sieu School since the very beginning of the school's Cambridge journey, reflecting their long-standing commitment to developing globally minded, critically engaged learners. Around 90 students are studying the subject at Cambridge Lower Secondary and 125 at Cambridge IGCSE™ level. Most of the learners are Vietnamese.

Learners study a range of global issues – such as climate change, environmental sustainability, artificial

intelligence, social media, education, health and wellbeing, and cultural identity.

The school believes that Cambridge Global Perspectives is not only about understanding the world; it also encourages students to develop a deep appreciation of Vietnam's history, culture and traditions. By exploring global issues through both local and international perspectives, students strengthen their sense of identity while becoming confident and responsible global citizens.

As they explore these issues, the learners develop transferable skills such as critical thinking, research and collaboration. But the school has found this subject has another key benefit too – it has been instrumental in developing students' English proficiency.



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Building students' confidence in using English

'Students have investigated topics from local, national and global perspectives, often comparing how different communities are affected by the same issue – such as plastic pollution,' says the school's Cambridge Global Perspectives teacher Josiah Ching Yi-Xiang. 'Most importantly, the students reflect on their own experience and the knowledge they have acquired to enhance their understanding and perception.'

Talking about their own history and culture takes away a lot of the stress of speaking a new language, says Josiah.

'Students feel like experts and focus more on sharing their story than worrying about perfect grammar – this pride makes them much more excited to speak up and use their English in class.'

The added benefits of teamwork

Much of the learning in Cambridge Global Perspectives is done as group work, which includes working with students around the world. Students are also required to make presentations on the issues they explore.

'Working in groups gives students a confidence boost because they are constantly sharing ideas,' says Josiah.

'Every student also has to stand up and explain their research to the class. This regular practice helps them

overcome their fear of making mistakes and makes talking in English feel much more natural. It transforms English from a passive subject into an active tool for research, critical analysis and debate.'

At **Cambridge IGCSE level**, students are assessed on three components: a written exam, a team project and an individual report. For the team project, each group chooses from a topic list and identifies a local issue.

'Collaborative elements like the team project elevate students' oral confidence by requiring them to clearly articulate and defend their own viewpoints before an audience,' says Josiah.

Improving written English and vocabulary

The team project includes a personal element, for which students must write a reflective paper on their research, their contribution to the team element and their personal learning.

For the individual report component, each student must research a significant global issue from different perspectives and reflect on their own personal perspective. They devise their own title and write their own report.

'In this individual report, students must analyse complex articles for bias,' says Josiah. 'When they do this, they rapidly build advanced academic vocabulary and reading stamina.'

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Offering students access to more sources

Learning in more than one language also increases students' ability to consider global issues from a wider range of perspectives. This is because by conducting bilingual research, students have access to a wider range of sources of information, explains Josiah.

'In Cambridge Global Perspectives lessons, students often compare local viewpoints with international ones, so being able to engage with information in multiple languages helps them move beyond a single perspective.'

'When investigating a topic, students look for sources in both English and Vietnamese, then they compare perspectives from the different sources. It actually makes the research easier as they have access to more sources.'

Josiah says that this bilingual research develops greater cultural awareness, empathy and open-mindedness.

'It encourages students to question assumptions and appreciate the complexity of global issues. They quickly realise that people from different countries or cultural backgrounds might view the same issue in very different ways.'

'This not only strengthens their language skills but also helps to develop their deep analysis and critical thinking skills.'



Strategies to support language development

Josiah has adopted specific teaching techniques to support students in developing their English skills while they study Cambridge Global Perspectives.

'I mix language and topic learning by giving students sentence starters during big discussions,' he says.

'For example, when studying climate change, I give them phrases like "This writer might be biased because..." to help them explain their thoughts. This helps them learn new vocabulary naturally while thinking about real-world issues instead of just memorising word lists.'

One strategy that Josiah has found can work particularly well is allowing students to discuss complex ideas in their stronger language first before presenting their conclusions in English. This helps them to fully understand the different sides, he says.

'Maximum use of English is encouraged for both communicating among peers and with teachers, and for brainstorming, but we believe that a flexible use will be most effective.'

'For example, students might brainstorm a topic like renewable energy in Vietnamese during group discussions to deeply grasp the pros and cons, and then work together to translate and refine their arguments and views into English.'

'This keeps them focused on the big ideas instead of getting stuck on finding the right words too early, so they focus on the quality of their thinking rather than being limited by language.'



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A student's perspective

Vietnamese student Uyen Mai is one of the learners at Nguyen Sieu School who has found Cambridge IGCSE Global Perspectives to be of huge benefit in developing her English language skills.

'Cambridge Global Perspectives was one of the most valuable subjects I've studied,' she says. 'I also enjoyed the subject a lot because I got to work with my classmates and hear their opinions about different issues.'

'The subject strengthened my research and my academic writing skills by teaching me how to evaluate sources critically and how to communicate my ideas clearly in English.'

'I'm proud to share that I achieved Top in Vietnam and Top 5 in the World for Cambridge IGCSE Global Perspectives. It's a rewarding outcome of my enthusiasm for the subject.'



Student Uyen Mai with Rod Smith, Group Managing Director for International Education at Cambridge

Providing opportunities for English learning

Josiah urges other schools to take the opportunity to use Cambridge Global Perspectives as a way of helping to equip students with a strong foundation in English.

'I would absolutely recommend Cambridge Global Perspectives to other bilingual or multilingual schools,' he says.

'From my perspective and experience, it is particularly well suited to bilingual and multilingual schools because it values inquiry, discussion and multiple viewpoints rather than focusing solely on content knowledge.'

'It gives students meaningful opportunities to use their languages as tools for learning and investigation while it helps them develop complementary skills such as research, critical thinking, collaboration, communication and reflection.'

'These skills are highly transferable and prepare students well for further study and an increasingly interconnected world, which makes Cambridge Global Perspectives a highly practical and applicable subject. This is a clear strength.'

“ At Nguyen Sieu, bilingual education is never about simply teaching subjects in English. It is about empowering students to think critically, communicate confidently and engage with the world from multiple perspectives. Cambridge Global Perspectives exemplifies this philosophy. ”

— Principal of Nguyen Sieu School

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