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Bridging the Civic Knowledge Gap through SDG-Integrated ELT in Mongolia

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Abstract

In the context of globalization, higher education is expected to cultivate not only language proficiency but also globally aware and socially responsible citizens. However, a persistent pedagogical challenge in Mongolia is that many undergraduates have limited awareness of local and global issues, creating a gap in thematic knowledge that constrains their ability to engage in higher-order thinking across both written and spoken academic contexts. When instruction focuses primarily on the formal aspects of language, this lack of awareness can lead to passive learning rather than active engagement with real-world issues. To address this gap, a semester-long classroom-based intervention was implemented in an upper-intermediate Academic English course at the National University of Mongolia. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were incorporated into instruction through reading, guided discussion, and interactive tasks designed to promote engagement with real-world topics. This approach aligns with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) principles by integrating subject knowledge with language development. A rubric-based framework was employed to assess writing across four dimensions: thematic knowledge, critical thinking, lexical resource, and coherence and language accuracy. Pre-intervention analysis indicated that learners relied on general, descriptive ideas, with limited topic awareness and little analytical development. Post-intervention results showed clear gains across all four dimensions, particularly in incorporating relevant civic knowledge, applying critical reasoning, and using more precise vocabulary in coherent academic writing. These findings suggest that SDG-integrated ELT can enhance both language proficiency and civic awareness, while offering a practical pedagogical model for integrating global issues into ELT.

Keywords: Academic Writing; Classroom-Based Intervention; Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL); Critical Thinking; Language Proficiency