

## Blending Climate Education with English Language Teaching in the Context of Barriers and Prospects

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### Abstract

The integration of climate education into English Language Teaching (ELT) has emerged as an innovative and necessary approach in the 21st-century classroom. As environmental crises intensify, educators are increasingly challenged to equip students with the linguistic competence and critical awareness required to understand global climate issues. This paper explores the pedagogical possibilities and obstacles involved in embedding climate-related themes into ELT. It examines how climate topics can enrich language learning by providing authentic, meaningful content that promotes critical thinking, intercultural awareness, and communicative competence. Through content-based instruction, project-based learning, and multimodal tasks, teachers can design lessons that simultaneously develop language skills and environmental consciousness. However, several challenges hinder effective implementation, including teachers' limited training in climate literacy, insufficient classroom resources, curriculum constraints, and the difficulty of balancing language objectives with scientific content. Additionally, students' varied backgrounds and levels of environmental awareness may influence classroom participation.

Despite these hurdles, the integration of climate education offers significant opportunities to transform ELT into a platform for global citizenship and sustainability education. By merging climate content with language pedagogy, teachers can empower learners to articulate environmental concerns, participate in global dialogues, and become responsible agents of change. This paper ultimately argues that climate-focused ELT not only enhances linguistic development but also nurtures ecological responsibility, making it a vital component of modern education.

**Keywords:** Climate Education, Content-Based Instruction, English Language Teaching, Global Citizenship

## **Introduction**

The growing urgency of climate change has transformed education systems worldwide, compelling educators to integrate environmental awareness into various disciplines. English Language Teaching (ELT), traditionally centered on linguistic and communicative competence, is increasingly being recognized as a powerful platform for addressing global environmental challenges. As English continues to function as the dominant language of international communication, scientific research, and global policy discussions, incorporating climate education within ELT allows learners to access, understand, and engage with contemporary issues that transcend borders. Integrating climate-related themes into ELT enriches the learning process by offering authentic materials such as articles, speeches, documentaries, climate reports, and digital media. These materials not only enhance listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills but also encourage learners to critically analyze environmental issues and participate in meaningful discussions. Furthermore, climate-themed lessons foster values of responsibility, empathy, and sustainability skills essential for shaping environmentally conscious citizens. Despite its potential, this integration poses several challenges. Teachers may lack adequate training in climate literacy, while rigid curricula and limited resources can inhibit innovation in lesson planning.

## **Challenges in Integrating Climate Education into ELT**

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**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 25:12 December 2025

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Integrating climate education into English Language Teaching (ELT) presents several interconnected challenges that affect both teachers and learners. Many English teachers feel unprepared to discuss environmental issues because they lack sufficient climate literacy, having received little or no training in climate science or sustainability during their professional preparation. This lack of confidence often leads to hesitation in addressing climate topics in the classroom. In addition, rigid and exam-oriented curricula leave limited room to incorporate interdisciplinary content, as teachers must prioritize grammar, vocabulary, and prescribed textbook lessons aligned with assessment requirements. The absence of appropriate and accessible teaching materials further complicates the situation, particularly in schools with limited resources, where authentic climate-related texts and multimedia content are not readily available or suitable for language learners. Even when resources exist, the complexity of scientific terminology and abstract concepts makes it difficult for teachers to balance language objectives with environmental content, sometimes resulting in cognitive overload for students.

### **Opportunities for Integrating Climate Education in ELT**

Integrating climate education into English Language Teaching (ELT) offers a wide range of opportunities that can enrich both language learning and students' understanding of global environmental issues. Climate-related themes provide authentic, meaningful contexts for communication, allowing students to practice language skills through discussions, debates, reading tasks, and writing activities connected to real-world concerns. Such content naturally enhances vocabulary development, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities, as students analyse causes, consequences, and possible solutions to climate challenges. This approach also promotes interdisciplinary learning by connecting English with science, geography, social studies, and civic education, helping learners develop a more holistic understanding of the world. Climate issues often resonate with students' own experiences, whether related to weather changes, pollution, or local environmental problems, which increases engagement and personal connection two key factors in effective language learning.

The availability of digital tools and multimodal resources such as documentaries, podcasts, info graphics, and online articles further supports innovative teaching practices and

caters to diverse learning styles. These materials make lessons more interactive and allow teachers to incorporate project-based and collaborative tasks that build teamwork, creativity, and communication skills. Integrating climate education also helps students develop a sense of environmental responsibility and global citizenship, encouraging them to reflect on their roles in promoting sustainability.

### **Teacher Perceptions and Attitudes towards Climate Education in ELT**

Teacher perceptions and attitudes play a central role in determining how effectively climate education can be integrated into English Language Teaching (ELT). Many teachers recognize the urgency of climate change and believe that English classrooms are ideal spaces for raising awareness through meaningful discussions, authentic texts, and communicative activities. They often observe that students become more engaged when lessons relate to real-world environmental issues, which motivates teachers to incorporate such topics more frequently. However, their enthusiasm is sometimes limited by a lack of confidence in climate knowledge, as many ELT practitioners have not received adequate training in environmental science and fear providing inaccurate information.

This uncertainty makes some teachers hesitant to introduce climate-related themes without proper guidance or professional development. Additionally, teachers are concerned about balancing linguistic objectives with interdisciplinary content, especially in exam-driven systems where time and curriculum demands restrict flexibility. Their attitudes are also shaped by institutional factors: when schools encourage innovation, provide resources, and support cross-curricular learning, teachers feel more empowered to integrate climate education; conversely, limited institutional backing reduces their willingness to deviate from prescribed materials. Personal beliefs and values further influence perceptions, as teachers who are environmentally conscious tend to adopt climate themes more readily, viewing ELT as a platform for social and global responsibility.

### **Conclusion**

Integrating climate education into English Language Teaching (ELT) offers a timely and transformative opportunity to enhance both linguistic proficiency and environmental awareness among learners. As global climate challenges intensify, the language classroom has become an essential space for fostering critical thinking, global citizenship, and sustainable attitudes. While teachers acknowledge the value of embedding climate-related themes into ELT, various challenges such as inadequate training, limited institutional support, curriculum rigidity, and concerns about content knowledge continue to hinder effective implementation. Nevertheless, the opportunities are substantial: climate education promotes authentic communication, encourages interdisciplinary learning, increases student engagement, and empowers both teachers and learners to actively participate in global environmental dialogue. Teacher perceptions and attitudes remain central to the success of this integration. When educators view climate issues as relevant and meaningful, their willingness to innovate increases, with appropriate resources, professional development, and administrative encouragement, ELT practitioners can confidently incorporate climate themes through multimodal materials, project-based tasks, and interactive discussions.

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