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INTEGRATING HUMANISTIC PERSPECTIVES INTO CLIMATE-CONSCIOUS ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS IN BURKINA FASO SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The 2021 educational reform in Burkina Faso introduced the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) to promote learner-centred, interdisciplinary, and competency-oriented education. Within this framework, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching is expected to support not only language development but also the acquisition of transferable competencies such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and responsible citizenship. This study explores teachers' and students' perceptions of integrating humanistic perspectives into climate-conscious EFL teaching in secondary schools. It examines the contribution of literature, history, philosophy, and arts to environmental language education, as well as related opportunities and challenges. Grounded in Critical Pedagogy, Environmental Humanities, and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), the study adopted a qualitative exploratory design through semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions. Data were analysed using V. Braun and V. Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Findings show that EFL teaching remains mainly grammar and text-oriented, although environmental themes are emerging. Participants recognised the value of humanistic resources in promoting meaningful language learning and environmental awareness.

Keywords: Competency-Based Approach (CBA), Climate Change Education, Critical Pedagogy, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Humanistic Perspectives.

Résumé

La réforme éducative introduite au Burkina Faso en 2021 a adopté l'Approche par les Compétences (APC), qui vise à promouvoir un enseignement centré sur l'apprenant, l'interdisciplinarité et orienté vers le développement des compétences. Dans ce cadre, l'enseignement de l'anglais comme langue étrangère est appelé à contribuer non seulement au développement des compétences linguistiques, mais aussi à celui des compétences transversales telles que la pensée critique, la communication, la collaboration et la citoyenneté responsable. Cette étude analyse les perceptions des enseignants et des élèves sur l'intégration des perspectives humanistes dans l'enseignement de l'anglais sensible aux enjeux climatiques au secondaire. Elle examine le rôle de la littérature, de l'histoire, de la philosophie et des arts dans l'éducation environnementale en anglais. S'appuyant sur la pédagogie critique, les humanités environnementales et l'Apprentissage Intégré des Contenus et des Langues, l'étude a adopté une approche qualitative exploratoire à travers des entretiens et des discussions de groupe. Les données ont été analysées selon l'approche thématique de V. Braun et V. Clarke (2006). Les résultats montrent un enseignement encore dominé par la grammaire et les textes, malgré l'introduction progressive des thèmes environnementaux. Les participants reconnaissent le potentiel des ressources humanistes pour un apprentissage significatif et une conscience écologique accrue.

Mots-clés : Approche par les Compétences (APC), Éducation au changement climatique, Pédagogie critique, Anglais comme langue étrangère (EFL), Perspectives humanistes.

INTRODUCTION

Climate change has become one of the major global challenges of the twenty-first century, affecting ecosystems, livelihoods, and sustainable development. In response, education is increasingly recognised as a key strategy for preparing learners to understand environmental issues and participate responsibly in tackling them. UNESCO (2021) therefore recommends integrating climate change education across school subjects to develop learners' knowledge, critical thinking, values, and environmental responsibility.

In Burkina Faso, climate-related challenges such as drought, flooding, desertification, and land degradation have heightened the need for education that equip young people to address environmental issues. In line with this goal, the Ministry of National Education introduced the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) into secondary education in 2021. Beyond language skills, the reform promotes the development of transferable competencies like communication, critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving, and responsible citizenship (MENAPLN, 2021). Within this framework, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) can offer authentic opportunities to discuss environmental concerns while enhancing communicative competence.

Recent research suggests that environmental education is more effective when it extends beyond scientific facts to include ethical, cultural, historical, and social dimensions (D. B. Rose et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2021). Humanistic resources, including literature, history, philosophy, music, films, and storytelling, can help learners explore climate change through human experiences, encourage empathy, and promote critical reflection while supporting meaningful language learning. Such an approach aligns with Humanistic Education (A. H. Maslow, 1970; C. Rogers, 1969), Environmental Humanities (D. B. Rose et al., 2012; R. Emmett, 2017), and Content and Language Integrated Learning.

Although previous studies in Burkina Faso have examined curriculum implementation, communicative language teaching, and challenges related to the Competency-Based Approach (E. Somé-Guiébré, 2018, 2021; L. Soma & Sanon Ouattara, 2023; G. J. Ouédraogo Bonkougou & F. E. Sanon Ouattara, 2024; K. Somé, 2025), little attention has been paid to the integration of humanistic perspectives into climate-conscious EFL teaching. Moreover, teachers' and students' perceptions of this emerging approach remain largely unexplored. This gap limits understanding of how English classrooms might simultaneously contribute to language learning and environmental education.

This study, therefore, investigates teachers' and students' perceptions of incorporating humanistic perspectives into climate-aware EFL teaching in Burkina Faso secondary schools.

The main purpose is to find out the extent to which the integration of humanistic perspectives into English language teaching contribute to solve climate related challenges in Burkina Faso. Specifically, it aims to: (1) assess the perceived contribution of humanistic resources to climate-aware English teaching; (2) examine teachers' and students' views of integrating environmental and humanistic themes into English lessons; and (3) identify the opportunities and challenges of implementing this approach within the Competency-Based Approach. Consequently, the main research question of this study is: To what extent can the integration of humanistic perspectives into English language teaching contribute to solve climate related challenges in Burkina Faso? More specifically: (1) How can humanistic perspectives enhance climate-aware EFL teaching in Burkina Faso secondary schools? (2) What are teachers' and students' perceptions of incorporating environmental and humanistic themes into English language instruction? (3) What opportunities and challenges affect the implementation of climate-aware language education within the Competency-Based Approach?

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Humanistic Perspectives and Climate-Conscious EFL Teaching

Humanistic Education views learning as a holistic process that promotes learners' intellectual, emotional, and social development (A. H. Maslow, 1970; C. Rogers, 1969). In language education, it encourages learner-centred instruction through meaningful communication, creativity, collaboration, and reflection rather than the simple transmission of grammatical knowledge. Humanistic resources such as literature, storytelling, music, films, and drama create authentic contexts that foster communicative competence while developing empathy and intercultural understanding (G. Moskowitz, 1978).

These principles align with recent developments in climate change education. UNESCO (2021) argues that education should prepare learners not only to understand environmental problems but also to develop the competencies and values required for sustainable development. Likewise, the Environmental Humanities emphasise that climate change is not only a scientific issue but also a cultural, ethical, historical, and social one (D. B. Rose et al., 2012; R. S. Emmett & D. E. Nye, 2017). Literary texts, historical narratives, philosophy, and the arts therefore provide opportunities for learners to explore environmental challenges from multiple perspectives while encouraging critical reflection and responsible citizenship (G. Garrard, 2012; A. Johns-Putra, 2016).

Within English language teaching, climate-related themes also provide authentic communicative contexts. K. A. Cates (2002) and M. Byram (2013) argue that language education should foster global citizenship by engaging learners with contemporary social issues. Similarly, R. S. Pinner (2021) and M. J. De la Fuente (2022) show that integrating sustainability into language teaching enhances learner motivation while supporting meaningful language use. Together, these studies suggest that combining environmental themes with humanistic resources can strengthen both language learning and environmental awareness.

1.2 English Language Teaching in Burkina Faso

The introduction of the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) in Burkina Faso in 2021 marked an important shift toward learner-centred education. The reform encourages the development of transferable competencies, including communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving (MENAPLN, 2021). Consequently, English teaching is expected to provide learners with opportunities to use language in authentic situations rather than focusing exclusively on grammatical accuracy.

However, previous studies indicate that implementing these objectives remains challenging. E. Somé-Guiébré (2018, 2021) reports that English teaching continues to be largely influenced by traditional and examination-oriented practices. Similarly, L. Soma and F. E. Sanon Ouattara (2023), A. E. Pardevan et al. (2024), and K. Somé (2025) identify inadequate teaching resources, limited teacher preparation, insufficient technological support, and large classes as major obstacles to implementing learner-centred pedagogy.

While international research increasingly supports integrating environmental themes into English language teaching, studies in Burkina Faso have mainly focused on curriculum implementation, communicative approaches, and learner-centred pedagogy. Little empirical research has explored how literature, history, philosophy, the arts, and other humanistic resources can support climate-conscious EFL teaching or how teachers and students perceive such integration within the Competency-Based Approach. The present study addresses this gap by examining teachers' and students' perceptions of integrating humanistic perspectives into climate-conscious English language teaching in Burkina Faso secondary schools.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws on three complementary frameworks: Critical Pedagogy, Environmental Humanities, and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). According to P. Freire (2005), Critical Pedagogy views language education as a process of developing

critical consciousness through dialogue, reflection, and action. In climate education, it encourages learners to scrutinise environmental problems that affect their communities. It also enables them to explore sustainable solutions while developing English language skills.

D. B. Rose et al. (2012) and R. S. Emmett & D. E. Nye (2017) point out that Environmental Humanities explore environmental issues through literary, cultural, historical, philosophical, and ethical perspectives. Literary texts, narratives, and other cultural resources foster critical reflection and emotional engagement with climate change, making environmental learning meaningful in EFL classrooms (T. Clark, 2011, p. 1-10; G. Garrard, 2012, p. 1-8; A. Johns-Putra, 2016).

Content and Language Integrated Learning integrates content and language learning simultaneously (D. Marsh, 2002, p. 15). In this study, climate change provides authentic content through which learners develop English while enhancing their environmental knowledge. Together, these frameworks support language development, environmental literacy, critical thinking, and global citizenship.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative exploratory design to examine teachers' and students' perceptions of integrating humanistic perspectives into climate-conscious EFL teaching in Burkina Faso secondary schools. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it enabled an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and classroom practices within the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) (J. W. Creswell, 2013).

The study was conducted in five public secondary schools (Lycée Nelson Mandela, Lycée Communal Bambata, Lycée Marien N'Gouabi, Lycée Nicola Depreux, and Lycée Communal de Nongremassom) in Ouagadougou implementing the CBA. Using purposive sampling (M. Q. Patton, 2015), ten (10) EFL teachers and twenty-four (24) students from different grade levels were selected. The students participated in four focus-group discussions of six participants each. These participants are chosen because they all come from government schools where the CBA is applied. Most importantly, this population is more likely to provide the necessary information needed for the study.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers and focus-group discussions involving students. The teacher interviews explored classroom practices, the integration of environmental and humanistic themes, and the challenges encountered during implementation. The focus-group discussions examined students' classroom experiences, their perceptions of climate-conscious English teaching and their suggestions for improving English

lessons. The teacher interviews were conducted in English whereas the student discussions were held in French to facilitate participants' expressions and were subsequently translated into English. All sessions were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent and transcribed using TurboScribe.

The data were analysed following V. Braun and V. Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. After repeated reading of the transcripts, the data were coded and organised into themes that addressed the research questions. Comparing teachers' and students' perspectives strengthened the credibility of the findings through data triangulation. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was ensured through the use of pseudonyms and the secure storage of research data.

4. FINDINGS

The findings are organised according to the themes explored in the semi-structured interviews with teachers and the focus-group discussions with students.

4.1 Current English Classroom Practices

Both teachers and students described English lessons as predominantly centred on grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and textbook activities. Although speaking exercises were occasionally organised, participants agreed that classroom instruction remained largely examination-oriented. Teachers explained that lessons generally follow the prescribed textbook sequence, leaving little time for projects, debates, or collaborative learning.

Students' responses confirmed these descriptions. Across the focus groups, participants repeatedly stated that they mainly studied grammar, texts, vocabulary and oral exercises. One student explained: "We study grammar, oral expression and texts". Another participant added: "We revise grammar and vocabulary, and we study texts". Students from lower classes reported similar experiences, indicating that grammar and text-based instruction remain the dominant classroom activities.

Teachers also explained that the Competency-Based Approach encourages learner participation, but several admitted that implementation is often constrained by examination requirements, large classes and limited instructional resources. Consequently, learner-centred activities such as projects, debates, role plays or collaborative investigations remain relatively infrequent. Overall, participants described English teaching as largely centred on linguistic competence, with limited opportunities for interdisciplinary learning.

4.2 Environmental and Climate Education in English Lessons

Teachers unanimously reported incorporating environmental topics whenever they appeared in the national curriculum or prescribed textbooks. The themes most frequently mentioned included climate change, pollution, waste management, deforestation, biodiversity conservation, environmental protection and sustainable development. Teachers explained that these topics are usually introduced through reading texts, guided discussions, pictures and comprehension activities. Some also reported using newspaper articles, videos or short classroom debates whenever resources were available.

Students confirmed having studied several environmental themes. One participant stated: “We discussed the causes and consequences of climate change, such as deforestation and the destruction of the ozone layer”. Another observed: “Climate change is caused by deforestation”. A Terminale (Form 3 of second cycle) student explained: “We discussed pollution, agroforestry and environmental problems”. Several participants associated pollution and climate change with human activities. However, environmental education was not uniformly experienced across schools. Students from lower grades reported that climate-related topics had not yet been introduced into their English lessons. Overall, participants indicated that environmental education has become increasingly visible in EFL classrooms, although its implementation remains uneven across educational levels.

4.3 Integration of Humanistic Resources

Teachers generally expressed positive attitudes toward integrating literature, storytelling, history, music, films, philosophy and other cultural resources into English teaching. They viewed these materials as effective means of encouraging discussion, developing empathy and connecting language learning with learners’ everyday experiences. Nevertheless, most teachers acknowledged that these resources were only occasionally used because of limited instructional time, insufficient teaching materials and curriculum constraints.

Students’ experiences reflected similar variability. Some participants reported never studying literary or artistic works during English lessons. One student commented: “Maybe these topics are not included in the curriculum.” In contrast, students from another school described studying Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream”, explaining that the text addressed dreams, racial discrimination and equality. One participant explained: “We studied I Have a Dream. It talks about dreams and the emancipation of Black people.” Others referred to lessons on Burkinabè cultural events such as FESPACO and SIAO, which were used to discuss

culture and African cooperation. These findings suggest considerable diversity in the use of humanistic resources across schools and classrooms.

4.4 Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Climate-Conscious Humanistic EFL

Teachers consistently viewed environmental and humanistic perspectives as compatible with the objectives of the Competency-Based Approach. They considered these themes useful for promoting communication, critical thinking and responsible citizenship while simultaneously developing English language proficiency. Students expressed similar opinions. Many believed that English lessons could help them better understand contemporary global issues, including climate change, environmental degradation, terrorism, discrimination and social injustice.

One student observed: "English is spoken almost everywhere in the world". Another added: "It helps us understand injustices around the world." Others explained that English texts expose learners to international events and encourage broader understanding of global challenges. Overall, participants perceived English as a subject that connects language learning with broader social and environmental concerns.

4.5 Learner Motivation and Preferred Learning Resources

Both teachers and students reported that learners generally respond positively when English lessons include environmental or humanistic themes. Teachers observed that real-world issues stimulate discussion and increase classroom participation. Students also expressed strong preferences for authentic and engaging learning materials. The most frequently mentioned resources included music, films, stories, environmental topics, local cultural narratives and interactive classroom games.

One participant explained: "If music were included, English lessons would be more interesting". Another suggested combining music with films to make English classes more attractive. Several students also indicated that environmental themes help them better understand issues affecting their communities while making English lessons more meaningful. Overall, participants associated authentic social, environmental and cultural content with increased learner engagement.

4.6 Opportunities and Challenges for Implementation

Teachers identified several factors that could facilitate the integration of climate-conscious and humanistic perspectives into English teaching. Among the enabling factors were

the Competency-Based Approach, learners' interest in contemporary issues, curriculum flexibility and the availability of authentic teaching materials.

However, participants also reported numerous constraints. The most frequently mentioned challenges included insufficient teaching materials, limited Internet access, inadequate technological resources, lack of specialised teacher training, large class sizes, time constraints and examination pressure. Teachers also emphasised the need for professional development focusing on interdisciplinary teaching, climate education and learner-centred methodologies. Participants recommended greater institutional support through improved curriculum guidance, digital resources, pedagogical materials and continuous professional training. These findings indicate that participants viewed climate-conscious humanistic EFL teaching as feasible but dependent on adequate institutional support and professional capacity.

5. DISCUSSION

This study explored teachers' and students' perceptions of integrating humanistic perspectives into climate-conscious English language teaching in Burkina Faso secondary schools. The findings suggest that although the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) encourages learner-centred and interdisciplinary teaching, English instruction remains largely organised around grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and textbook activities. Teachers attributed this situation to examination requirements, limited instructional resources, and large classes, while students similarly described lessons dominated by linguistic activities. These perceptions support previous studies conducted in Burkina Faso, which report that traditional and examination-oriented practices continue to influence English language teaching despite curriculum reforms (E. Somé-Guiébré, 2018, 2021; A. E. Pardevan et al., 2024).

The findings also indicate that environmental education is gradually becoming part of English lessons. Both teachers and students referred to topics such as climate change, pollution, deforestation, biodiversity, and sustainable development, which are mainly introduced through reading texts and classroom discussions. However, participants reported that the frequency and depth of these topics vary across schools and grade levels. This finding is consistent with UNESCO (2021), which observes that environmental issues are increasingly included in school curricula but are often treated as content to be learned rather than opportunities for critical reflection and active engagement. Participants' responses therefore suggest that environmental education has begun to enter English classrooms, although its implementation remains uneven.

An important contribution of this study concerns participants' perceptions of humanistic resources. Teachers generally considered literature, storytelling, music, films, history, and local cultural materials to be valuable resources for enriching English lessons. Students who had experienced such materials also described them as interesting and motivating because they connected language learning with authentic social and cultural issues. Nevertheless, both groups indicated that these resources were used only occasionally because of curriculum constraints, limited teaching materials, and insufficient instructional time. These findings support the view of the Environmental Humanities that literary and cultural texts can encourage ethical reflection, empathy, and multiple perspectives on environmental issues (D. B. Rose et al., 2012; R. S. Emmett & D. E. Nye, 2017), while suggesting that their classroom use in Burkina Faso remains largely dependent on individual teachers' initiatives.

Participants also perceived English as a subject capable of addressing wider social and environmental concerns in addition to developing communicative competence. Teachers believed that environmental and humanistic themes were compatible with the objectives of the Competency-Based Approach, while students considered English a means of understanding global issues such as climate change, discrimination, and social justice. These perceptions are consistent with Content and Language Integrated Learning (D. Marsh, 2002), which advocates learning language through meaningful content, and with M. Byram's (2013) conception of language education as a means of promoting intercultural citizenship. Rather than viewing English solely as an academic subject, participants associated it with broader educational and civic purposes.

Another noteworthy finding concerns learner engagement. Both teachers and students reported that authentic materials, including music, films, storytelling, debates, and local cultural narratives, generated greater learner interest and participation than traditional textbook activities. Although the present study did not measure learning outcomes, these perceptions are consistent with Humanistic Education, which emphasises meaningful and personally relevant learning experiences (C. Rogers, 1969; G. Moskowitz, 1978). The findings therefore suggest that participants believe climate-conscious and humanistic approaches can make English learning more engaging while encouraging discussion of issues that are relevant to learners' lives.

Despite these positive perceptions, participants identified several obstacles to implementation. Teachers referred to inadequate teaching materials, limited technological resources, insufficient professional development, examination pressure, and large class sizes as the principal barriers to integrating climate-conscious and humanistic approaches. Students

likewise expressed the need for more varied teaching materials and interactive classroom activities. These findings indicate that successful implementation depends not only on teachers' willingness but also on institutional support, curriculum guidance, and access to appropriate resources.

The findings should, however, be interpreted cautiously. Because this study adopted a qualitative exploratory design based on purposive sampling, its purpose was to explore perceptions rather than evaluate the effectiveness of a pedagogical approach. Consequently, the results cannot be generalised to all secondary schools in Burkina Faso, nor do they demonstrate that integrating humanistic perspectives necessarily improves English proficiency or environmental literacy. Instead, they provide contextual insights into how teachers and students perceive this emerging approach and identify factors that may influence its implementation.

Overall, the study suggests that teachers and students view the integration of humanistic perspectives into climate-conscious EFL teaching as compatible with the objectives of the Competency-Based Approach. While participants recognised the educational value of combining language learning with environmental and cultural issues, they also highlighted the need for improved resources, teacher preparation, and institutional support. Future studies employing classroom interventions, mixed-methods, or quasi-experimental designs would be valuable for examining how these approaches influence language learning, critical thinking, and environmental awareness in Burkina Faso secondary schools.

6. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the participants' views, the following suggestions are proposed:

- Environmental topics could be included more often in English lessons because they provide meaningful contexts for language learning.
- English textbooks could include local environmental issues and humanistic resources such as stories, songs, literature, films, and cultural narratives.
- Teachers could use more learner-centred activities, including discussions, debates, role-plays, storytelling, project work, and creative writing, to increase learner participation.
- Teacher training programmes could include climate education, the use of humanistic teaching resources, and interdisciplinary approaches such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

-Educational authorities could provide more teaching materials, digital resources, and curriculum guidance to support climate-conscious English language teaching.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored teachers' and students' perceptions of integrating humanistic perspectives into climate-conscious EFL teaching in Burkina Faso secondary schools. The findings show that English teaching remains largely focused on grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and textbook activities, despite the learner-centred orientation of the Competency-Based Approach. Although environmental themes are increasingly included in English lessons, their implementation varies across schools.

Participants viewed literature, storytelling, music, films, and other humanistic resources as valuable for making language learning more engaging and for promoting reflection on environmental issues. However, they also identified challenges such as limited teaching materials, insufficient teacher training, inadequate technological resources, large class sizes, and examination-oriented practices.

The study contributes to the growing literature on climate-conscious language education by providing contextual evidence on opportunities and constraints for integrating humanistic perspectives into EFL teaching. Future research could use classroom intervention and mixed-methods designs with larger samples to examine the effects of these approaches on English language learning and environmental awareness.

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