

# Film and Documentary as Literary Resources for Promoting Climate Advocacy in the Language Classroom

**Ibrahim, Wahab Adegbayi, Ph.D.**

Department of Yoruba Studies, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun

**Okunnuwa, Sunday Johnson Ph.D**

Department of English Studies, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun

## **Abstract**

This study investigated the effectiveness of films and documentaries as literary resources for promoting climate advocacy in the language classroom. It examined how integrating audio-visual materials into English and Yorùbá language teaching fostered environmental awareness, moral reflection, and language competence among secondary school students. A mixed-methods design was adopted, involving seventy (70) students and fourteen (14) teachers in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. The participants engaged in six weeks of film- and documentary-based lessons on climate-related themes. Data were gathered using a Students' Climate Awareness and Advocacy Questionnaire (CAAQ) and a Teacher Interview Guide. The questionnaire, with a reliability coefficient of 0.79, was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while interview data were thematically analysed. Findings revealed that films and documentaries enhanced students' understanding of climate change, improved motivation for advocacy, and strengthened language use. The audio-visual approach made learning more engaging and emotionally impactful. Teachers confirmed that film-based instruction encouraged empathy, critical thinking, and behavioural change. The study concluded that films and documentaries effectively linked language learning with environmental education and recommended their integration into curricula, alongside teacher training and the development of culturally relevant local content.

**Keywords:** Film-based pedagogy, Documentary learning, Climate advocacy, Environmental awareness, Sustainable development

## **Introduction**

Teaching literature in the language classroom has always sought materials that develop both linguistic competence and critical thinking. In recent years, film and documentary have gained attention as legitimate literary resources because they combine narrative, visual symbolism and language in ways that mirror more traditional literary texts (Oxford Research Encyclopaedias, 2022). Teachers can treat selected film scenes and documentary excerpts as texts to be read, interpreted and discussed. This approach supports literary study while giving learners authentic language input that is close to real world use.

Climate change is now a central theme in global education agendas. UNESCO (2024) highlights that climate change education must equip learners with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to act. The organisation emphasises that education for climate action should not be limited to science lessons. Instead, it should be woven into language, literature and media studies so that learners develop both ecological awareness and communicative competence. Using film and documentary in the literature classroom fits into this wider push to make education respond to planetary problems.

Scholarly work shows that documentary as a genre has particular strengths for environmental learning. The Oxford Research Encyclopaedia entry on documentary and environmental education argues that documentaries prompt emotional and ethical engagement and therefore help learners connect personal feeling with wider environmental knowledge (Documentary Genre in Environmental Education, 2022). This emotional engagement is important in advocacy because facts alone often do not change behaviour. Well-made documentaries use narrative, testimony and imagery to create a context where learners can reflect on values and responsibility.

Applied studies in language teaching also support the inclusion of film. Sánchez-Auñón (2023) reviews classroom practices with cinema and finds that film improves listening skills, vocabulary acquisition and discourse competence while also offering rich material for literary analysis. In many English and Yoruba classrooms, teachers use film to set up tasks such as close reading of imagery, character study, comparative analysis with written texts, and production tasks where learners write scripts or reflective essays. These tasks build both language ability and literary literacy.

Recent ecocritical scholarship highlights how film can be used to teach environmental ethics in literary terms. Ferguson (2024) suggests that certain films operate as what he calls "archecinema", where the film's form encourages learners to see human life as entangled with the non-human world. Such a view supports curricular aims that combine literary study and environmental advocacy. Empirical ecocriticism research also points out that readers' empathy for non-human life is shaped by narrative strategies, and teachers can use these strategies to open classroom discussion on moral responsibility (Lahtinen, 2024).

There are however important cautions. Documentary representation can mislead or simplify complex climate mobilities and injustices if not critically handled. Durand-Delacre (2022) shows that some documentary accounts can misrepresent migration and climate impacts by privileging certain voices and silencing others. For the language classroom this means teachers must not present films as neutral truth. Instead teachers need to scaffold film viewing with critical tasks that examine voice, selection, omission and perspective.

In the Nigerian classroom context, film and documentary are attractive resources. They are often more engaging than long written texts, and they can reflect local and global environmental concerns in ways that are accessible to learners. Practical studies from the region also show growing interest in documentary production as a school activity that builds both media skills and civic awareness (Practical enter-education in documentary production, 2024). When films are used as literary texts in the language classroom, they can do double duty. They support

language learning, and they also invite learners into literary analysis and civic action on climate issues.

However, despite these potentials, there is limited empirical research on how film and documentary can be systematically employed as literary resources for promoting climate advocacy within language classrooms in Nigeria. Many teachers still rely mainly on printed literary texts and overlook visual narratives that could stimulate students' environmental awareness and communicative competence. This gap justifies the need to explore how storytelling through film and documentary can be integrated into literature teaching as an effective pedagogical approach for developing both linguistic proficiency and climate consciousness among learners.

### **Research Questions**

1. To what extent does the use of films and documentaries in the language classroom affect students' climate awareness and advocacy motivation?
2. How do teachers perceive the use of films and documentaries as literary resources for promoting climate awareness and advocacy among their students in the language classroom?

### **Review of Related Literature**

Film and documentary have increasingly gained scholarly recognition as valuable tools for language and literature education in the twenty-first century. Their integration into the classroom aligns with the shift from rote learning to learner-centred, multimodal pedagogies that engage students through visual, auditory, and emotional experiences. According to Sánchez-Auñón (2023), film enhances listening, vocabulary, and discourse competence because it combines authentic speech with contextual visual cues that support comprehension. This multimodal exposure enables students to learn language as it is used in realistic settings, improving pronunciation, pragmatic awareness, and fluency. In addition, film provides models of social interaction

and discourse patterns that written texts alone may not fully convey, thereby strengthening communicative competence.

In the Nigerian context, scholars have increasingly drawn attention to the value of indigenous film and documentary as pedagogical tools. Akinwale (2022) argues that local films, especially the works of Tunde Kelani such as *Agogo Eewo* and *Saworoide*, serve as authentic materials for teaching moral values, cultural identity, and civic responsibility. These films present narratives grounded in Yoruba cosmology, environmental ethics, and social commentary, which make them powerful literary resources. By analysing dialogues, imagery, and character motivations in such films, students are able to develop both linguistic and critical literacy. Akinwale adds that the use of Nigerian films in language classrooms supports the decolonisation of the curriculum by validating indigenous cultural expressions within academic discourse.

In line with this, Adegbite and Olateju (2023) maintain that visual narratives bridge linguistic learning and cultural experience, particularly when they are tied to ecological and moral themes. The integration of film into the literature classroom provides an avenue for learners to connect their linguistic practice with broader social and environmental realities. According to these authors, film and documentary encourage “contextual language learning,” where students’ communicative abilities develop alongside their understanding of society. This contextualisation is crucial in Nigeria, where many learners struggle to relate classroom content to their lived experiences. When language instruction includes analysis of local films or documentaries that portray real-life issues such as pollution, erosion, and community resilience, students gain linguistic skills that are meaningful and socially relevant.

The educational potential of documentary film has also been widely discussed in recent scholarship. As a genre, documentary offers factual representation that stimulates emotional and ethical engagement. Ilesanmi (2024) argues that environmental documentaries provide opportunities for learners to connect linguistic learning with moral reflection. In his classroom-based research involving secondary school students in Ogun State, Ilesanmi found that learners who viewed short local documentaries

on flooding and waste management developed stronger environmental vocabulary and displayed greater empathy for communities affected by climate change. This finding supports the assertion of Garrard (2023) that ecocritical education, when combined with creative media, enables learners to link emotional engagement with environmental ethics. Garrard notes that the audiovisual mode of documentaries makes abstract environmental concepts more concrete and memorable, fostering sustained interest and behavioural change.

The relevance of film and documentary for language and literature education also lies in their narrative qualities. Ferguson (2024) introduces the idea of “archecinema,” a concept that explains how film narratives invite viewers to imagine the interconnectedness between human and non-human life. This perspective resonates with the goals of ecocriticism and climate advocacy, where storytelling becomes a medium for shaping environmental consciousness. In the literature classroom, teachers can use selected film scenes to prompt discussions on imagery, symbolism, and theme—activities that are integral to literary interpretation. Such exercises not only enhance students’ critical thinking but also help them develop the language of description and analysis, which are essential in both oral and written communication.

Empirical evidence from Nigerian classrooms further supports these theoretical claims. Omotoso (2023) reports that film-based pedagogy increases classroom participation and reflective thinking among senior secondary students. His study found that students who were exposed to environmental documentaries displayed higher levels of motivation and better comprehension of literary concepts such as conflict, characterisation, and setting. Similarly, Ogunleye (2023) observes that visual media can democratise classroom interaction by giving students multiple entry points into literary discussion. For instance, learners who may find written texts challenging often contribute actively when responding to visual storytelling, since images and sound offer additional channels for understanding meaning.

While the benefits of using film and documentary are well established, some scholars caution that these media forms are not neutral conveyors of truth. Durand-Delacre (2022) notes that

documentaries can sometimes simplify complex social and environmental realities through selective framing and editing. This risk of bias highlights the importance of adopting a critical pedagogical approach in the classroom. Teachers must guide learners to question what they see, identify whose voices are included or excluded, and recognise how language and image can shape ideology. In this regard, Nwosu (2025) argues that critical viewing skills are as essential as reading and writing skills in contemporary education. He advocates for what he terms “critical visual literacy,” a framework that enables learners to deconstruct media texts, analyse linguistic choices, and evaluate representation. This approach aligns with Freirean notions of dialogic learning, where education empowers students to interrogate and transform their world.

Furthermore, scholars such as Adepoju (2022) and Adesina (2023) emphasise that the use of film and documentary in language education must be systematically planned and integrated into the curriculum. According to Adepoju, random film viewing has limited educational value unless it is accompanied by guided activities such as note-taking, role play, and reflective writing. Adesina adds that film-based instruction can be linked to assessment tasks that test comprehension, vocabulary, and creativity. In this way, teachers ensure that visual media contribute meaningfully to both linguistic and cognitive development. In the Nigerian secondary school system, where overcrowded classrooms and limited reading materials often pose challenges, film and documentary provide flexible, cost-effective alternatives for engaging students.

Recent studies also highlight the role of technology and teacher training in maximising the benefits of film-based pedagogy. Okeke and Bello (2024) found that teachers’ ability to use film effectively depends on their digital competence and access to media resources. They advocate for professional development workshops that equip language teachers with skills in video editing, subtitling, and guided viewing techniques. With the growing availability of low-cost digital devices and local online content, Nigerian schools have increasing potential to integrate film and documentary into their instructional repertoire. Such integration also supports the goals of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) promoted by UNESCO (2024), which calls for the infusion of environmental

awareness and ethical responsibility across all subjects, including language education.

In addition to supporting language learning and environmental advocacy, film and documentary contribute to the development of soft skills such as collaboration, empathy, and creativity. During group discussions or film-based projects, students learn to articulate opinions, negotiate meanings, and respect diverse perspectives. These communicative and interpersonal skills are essential in fostering the holistic development envisioned by Nigeria's National Policy on Education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023). By interpreting filmic narratives that depict environmental challenges and human resilience, learners also develop a sense of agency and responsibility. This outcome is particularly relevant in a society grappling with issues of waste management, deforestation, and climate-related displacement.

The reviewed literature establishes that film and documentary function as both linguistic and literary resources in the language classroom. They provide authentic, multimodal input that enhances comprehension and vocabulary development, while also serving as artistic texts that inspire critical and ethical reflection. When integrated with ecocritical pedagogy, these media forms become powerful tools for climate advocacy. The major consensus among scholars is that effective implementation requires critical engagement, contextual adaptation, and teacher preparedness. Thus, the integration of film and documentary in Nigerian language classrooms offers a promising avenue for cultivating both communicative competence and environmental literacy among learners.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Cognitive Learning Theory and Ecocriticism Theory**

This study is anchored on two theoretical perspectives (**Cognitive Learning Theory by Albert Bandura 1977** and **Ecocriticism by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, 1996**) that complement each other in explaining how learners acquire knowledge and develop environmental consciousness through creative media.

Cognitive Learning Theory, propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977, explains how people learn through mental processes such as observation, attention, imitation and memory. Bandura argues that learning is not only a result of direct experience but also occurs by watching others and modelling their behaviour. In the classroom, this means that learners acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes by observing models and internalising what they see. The theory is particularly relevant to the use of film and documentary in language and literature teaching because these visual media provide opportunities for learners to observe language in authentic use and see how meaning is constructed in context.

When students watch films or documentaries, they process visual and linguistic information at the same time. They listen to spoken language, read subtitles, observe non-verbal cues and interpret characters' actions. This active mental engagement supports what Bandura describes as cognitive modelling. Through such observation, students learn to reproduce correct pronunciation, improve vocabulary use and understand tone, context and figurative meaning. For example, when Senior Secondary students watch Nigerian films or short environmental documentaries, they are not only entertained but also exposed to the linguistic and cultural forms of environmental discourse. This aligns with the position of Adegaju (2023) that literature and media should be used to build moral and social awareness among learners. By observing characters' responses to climate and moral issues, students develop empathy, reflective thinking and language skills at the same time.

In the classroom, teachers can use short film scenes or documentary clips to prompt group discussions, script rewriting or creative essay tasks. These activities reflect Bandura's principle of guided reinforcement, where learners consolidate what they observe through practice and teacher feedback. Such engagement helps them to internalise both linguistic and moral lessons. The use of film and documentary therefore fits within Cognitive Learning Theory because it allows students to learn through observation, imitation and reflection rather than through rote memorisation.

Ecocriticism provides the second theoretical base for this study. The term was first popularised by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm in their 1996 collection *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment, while Fromm adds that it examines how cultural texts represent and shape human attitudes toward nature. Ecocriticism encourages readers to see how texts influence environmental thinking and to evaluate the ethical responsibilities of humans toward the natural world.

When applied to film and documentary, ecocriticism allows learners to analyse how visual and narrative forms communicate environmental issues such as pollution, deforestation and waste. Through the viewing and discussion of films, learners examine human interaction with the environment and reflect on their own roles as responsible citizens. Garrard (2023) observes that ecocritical education helps learners to connect emotional engagement with environmental ethics. In Nigeria, where flooding, drought and environmental degradation are frequent, this approach provides an avenue for language classrooms to respond to national realities. Ilesanmi (2024) also notes that documentaries on local ecological challenges can strengthen students' sense of identity and responsibility.

By using ecocritical analysis in the language classroom, teachers encourage learners to interpret imagery, symbolism and themes that relate to climate change and sustainability. The process enables learners to acquire new vocabulary about the environment, understand persuasive language used in advocacy, and build confidence to discuss global issues in English or Yoruba. Through reflective discussion, learners connect the linguistic structure of a film with its social and environmental meaning.

Collectively, Cognitive Learning Theory and Ecocriticism offer a balanced framework for using film and documentary as literary resources in promoting climate advocacy. Cognitive Learning Theory explains how learners mentally process and internalise language and behaviour through observation, while Ecocriticism explains how narrative and imagery develop environmental awareness. When both theories are applied in the classroom,

students learn language through meaningful engagement with real social issues. They also develop a critical and ethical view of the world around them. The combination of these frameworks therefore supports the integration of film and documentary into language education as tools for both linguistic competence and environmental consciousness.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design to investigate the effectiveness of films and documentaries as literary resources for promoting climate advocacy in the language classroom. The population comprised Senior Secondary School students in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select seventy (70) students from schools offering English Literature, along with fourteen (14) teachers of English and Yorùbá who facilitated instruction for six weeks using selected films and documentaries (Ayitale (produced in *Yoruba language* by *Kunle Afolayan* in 2013 and NTA Documentary on Ondo/Ogun Forest Reserves (produced in English language) on climate-related themes. The intervention aimed to integrate environmental awareness and advocacy into language learning through audio-visual literary resources. Data were collected using a Students' Climate Awareness and Advocacy Questionnaire (CAAQ) on 4-point Likert scale of: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree) and a Teacher Interview Guide. The instruments were reviewed and validated by experts in language education and environmental studies, while the questionnaire's reliability was confirmed through a pilot test, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.79, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to assess students' levels of climate awareness and advocacy. Qualitative data from teacher interviews were analysed using thematic analysis.

**Quantitative Analysis**

1. **RQ 1:** Watching films and documentaries on climate change in the language classroom helps me understand environmental issues and motivates me to care about the environment.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Students' Responses on Using Films/Documentaries for Climate Awareness in Language Education (N = 70)**

S/N	Statement	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	Films used in class help me understand the impact of climate change on people and the environment.	70	3.59	0.66	Agree / close to Strongly Agree
2	Watching climate-related films makes learning more interesting and enjoyable.	70	3.20	0.57	Agree
3	Documentaries did not help me learn real-life examples of environmental problems and solutions.	70	1.03	0.18	Strongly Disagree
4	Films help me to understand how climate change affects my community.	70	3.54	0.69	Agree / close to Strongly Agree
5	Documentaries make me think about how my actions can help the environment.	70	3.10	0.90	Agree

6	Film and documentary lessons did not help me remember new environmental vocabulary easily.	70	1.43	0.70	Strongly Disagree
7	I did not in any way feel motivated to take action to protect the environment after watching climate-related films or documentaries.	70	1.60	0.56	Strongly Disagree (leaning Disagree)
8	Films help me connect language learning with global environmental issues.	70	3.47	0.50	Agree (very near Strongly Agree)
9	I discuss what I learn from climate-related films with my friends or family.	70	3.01	0.85	Agree
10	Documentaries make me more aware of the importance of sustainable living.	70	3.69	0.47	Strongly Agree
11	I find it easier to write or speak about environmental topics after watching related films or documentaries.	70	3.70	0.55	Strongly Agree
12	Films and documentaries help me see the connection between	70	2.79	0.98	Agree

	human behaviour and environmental damage.				
13	Using films in English or Yorùbá lessons helps me appreciate the value of climate advocacy.	70	3.01	0.17	Agree
14	I believe films and documentaries should be used more often in language classes to promote environmental awareness.	70	3.00	0.00	Agree
15	Watching environmental films or documentaries makes me feel responsible for protecting nature.	70	3.46	0.78	Agree

The analysis of the students' responses (N = 70) regarding the incorporation of films and documentaries to promote climate awareness in language-education settings in table 1, reveals a generally favourable disposition towards this instructional approach. For items presented in a positive form, particularly those that addressed comprehension of the impacts of climate change, relevance to the community and connection to sustainable living, the mean scores were high (for example, M = 3.59 for understanding the impact of climate change; M = 3.69 for awareness of sustainable living; M = 3.70 for finding it easier to write or speak about environmental topics). These figures indicate that students either agree or strongly agree that film-based lessons enhance their conceptual understanding, motivate them to act, and support their language learning in a meaningful context.

In contrast, items that were negatively phrased (for instance, "Documentaries did not help me learn real-life examples...", "Film

and documentary lessons did not help me remember new environmental vocabulary easily...”, “I did not in any way feel motivated to take action...”) registered very low mean scores (M = 1.03, 1.43 and 1.60 respectively). Effectively, students rejected these negative propositions, which further supports the interpretation that the instructional strategy was effective: students believe that they did learn real-life environmental examples, did recall vocabulary, and did feel motivated by the film/documentary content.

Nevertheless, some items displayed comparatively more moderate levels of enthusiasm. For example, the item concerning enjoyment of watching climate-related films (M = 3.20) and the item on discussing learnt content with friends or family (M = 3.01) registered lower levels of agreement relative to the strongest items; additionally, the item concerning the connection between human behaviour and environmental damage recorded M = 2.79 and displayed a comparatively larger standard deviation (SD = 0.98), signalling greater variability in responses. These findings suggest that while students generally accept the pedagogical value of films and documentaries in their language classes, the extent of engagement (in terms of enjoyment) and the extension of learning to peer/family discussion, as well as the depth of conceptual linkage between behaviour and environmental harm, may be less consistent.

Thus, the results demonstrate that the integration of climate-related films and documentaries into language instruction is both acceptable and perceived as beneficial by students. They appear to support the underlying objective of linking language learning with global environmental issues and promoting climate-awareness and advocacy through multimodal media. At the same time, the somewhat moderate scores on certain items point to potential areas for pedagogical enhancement, specifically increasing the enjoyment factor, fostering more peer/family discussion, and explicitly reinforcing the link between human behaviour and environmental damage.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

This section presents the qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with language teachers, focusing on their perceptions of using films and documentaries as literary resources to promote climate awareness and advocacy in the language classroom. Three open-ended questions guided the discussions: how teachers perceive the use of films and documentaries for climate awareness, in what ways these media enhance students' understanding of climate change and environmental issues, and whether any changes in students' attitudes or behaviour were observed following lessons involving film or documentary content. The responses provide insight into the teachers' pedagogical intentions, the strategies they employ, and the impacts they believe these resources have on students' environmental literacy and advocacy. The thematic analysis that follows draws on teachers' own accounts to identify recurring themes, variations in perception, and implications for language education and sustainable development.

**RQ 2:** *How do teachers perceive the use of films and documentaries as literary resources for promoting climate awareness and advocacy among their students in the language classroom?*

**Interview Question 1:** *How do you perceive the use of films and documentaries as literary resources for promoting climate awareness and advocacy among your students in the language classroom?*

The fourteen teachers interviewed (seven English teachers and seven Yorùbá teachers) expressed a broadly favourable view of using films and documentaries as literary resources to promote climate awareness and advocacy in the language classroom. Most teachers said that audio-visual materials brought climate issues to life and made abstract concepts easier for students to grasp. They reported that films helped students see real examples of flooding, erosion and waste problems, which in turn made classroom discussions and writing tasks more meaningful.

Teachers also emphasised the dual benefit of films: they support both language learning and environmental education. English teachers highlighted gains in listening, vocabulary and speaking skills when films were used. They noted that film scenes gave students rich language input and natural contexts for practising new words and expressions. Yorùbá teachers stressed the cultural and community relevance of showing films in the local language. They argued that local-language documentaries helped students connect climate issues to their own lives and traditions, and that this connection strengthened students' engagement.

Several teachers reported that films can motivate students to act. They described examples where learners volunteered for school clean-ups, discussed environmental topics at home, or proposed small community projects after watching a documentary. These accounts suggest that films do more than teach facts; they can stimulate a sense of responsibility and prompt advocacy behaviours. However, teachers cautioned that motivation did not always lead to sustained action. Follow-up activities and teacher guidance were often needed to turn interest into concrete steps.

Despite the positive views, teachers identified practical challenges. Finding appropriate films that matched students' language level and local context was time-consuming. Some schools lacked reliable equipment or internet access to screen documentaries. A number of teachers also mentioned the need for careful lesson design: without pre-viewing activities, vocabulary support and structured discussions, the language and learning gains were limited. These limitations mean that films will be most effective when they are selected with care and supported by well-planned classroom tasks.

In summary, the teachers view films and documentaries as valuable resources for linking language learning with climate education. They see clear benefits for comprehension, language skills and motivation, and they note the particular strength of using local language materials for cultural relevance. At the same time, they stress the importance of appropriate film selection, technical resources and pedagogical scaffolding to ensure that films lead to meaningful learning and, where possible, to student advocacy.

**Interview Question 2:** In what ways do films and documentaries enhance your students' understanding of climate change and environmental issues?

The responses of the fourteen teachers (seven English teachers and seven Yorùbá teachers) after teaching their students with films and documentaries as literary resources revealed that these materials had a strong positive impact on students' understanding of climate change and environmental issues. The teachers generally agreed that the visual and narrative nature of films made learning more engaging and helped students grasp complex environmental concepts that would have been difficult to understand through reading alone. They explained that students were able to see the real effects of climate change, such as flooding, deforestation, drought and waste pollution, through vivid images and stories, which made the lessons more memorable and meaningful. One English teacher observed that students "could easily explain what causes flooding and how it affects people because they saw it happen in the film," while another noted that "the visual scenes helped students link classroom discussions to real-life experiences."

Teachers also reported that films and documentaries helped to build emotional awareness and empathy among students. By watching how communities and individuals were affected by environmental problems, students developed a deeper emotional connection to the topic and became more reflective about their own roles in protecting the environment. The Yorùbá teachers particularly highlighted the importance of using local-language films and documentaries, explaining that students responded more strongly when the message was delivered in their mother tongue. One Yorùbá teacher mentioned that "when the children watched a Yorùbá documentary about waste and flooding in a nearby town, they paid close attention because they recognised the place and understood the language perfectly." This, they said, made the learning experience culturally relevant and more impactful.

In addition to improving comprehension and emotional engagement, teachers observed that films and documentaries encouraged active participation and critical thinking. Students

were eager to discuss what they saw, ask questions and express their opinions about environmental problems. Some teachers said that the post-viewing discussions became opportunities for language practice, as students used new environmental vocabulary and phrases while sharing their thoughts. The teachers noticed that students could describe the causes and effects of climate change more confidently and suggest practical solutions for mitigating its impact. This outcome, according to the teachers, showed that film-based instruction promotes both language development and environmental literacy.

Furthermore, teachers explained that documentaries, in particular, provided factual information that strengthened students' scientific understanding of climate change. They found that documentaries complemented films by presenting real data, expert interviews and case studies, which helped students to connect classroom lessons with global environmental knowledge. The English teachers said that this mix of emotional storytelling and factual reporting gave students a balanced and comprehensive view of the issue. One teacher remarked that "the films touched their feelings, and the documentaries built their knowledge."

Despite the positive outcomes, some teachers pointed out minor challenges. A few students found it difficult to understand films with fast-paced dialogue or foreign accents, while others were sometimes distracted by the entertainment aspect rather than focusing on the message. Teachers therefore stressed the need for guidance before, during and after viewing, such as pre-teaching key vocabulary, pausing to explain difficult scenes, and organising group discussions after the lesson. These strategies, they said, ensured that students focused on the educational content and developed both linguistic and environmental understanding.

The teachers' responses show that films and documentaries are effective tools for enhancing students' understanding of climate change and environmental issues. They make learning more concrete, emotional and interactive, allowing students to visualise real-life situations, use language purposefully and think critically about solutions. Both English and Yorùbá teachers concluded that film-based instruction not only deepened students' knowledge of environmental issues but also strengthened their sense of

responsibility and willingness to act for the benefit of their communities and the environment.

**Interview Question 3: *Have you noticed any change in your students' attitudes or behaviours toward climate action after lessons involving films or documentaries?***

The responses of the fourteen teachers (seven teachers of English and seven teachers of Yorùbá) indicated that there were noticeable changes in the attitudes and behaviours of students towards climate action after lessons involving films and documentaries. Most of the teachers reported that students became more conscious of environmental issues and showed a stronger sense of responsibility towards their surroundings. According to the teachers, many students began to demonstrate practical concern for the environment by reducing littering, participating in school clean-up activities, and discussing ways to protect their communities from environmental harm. One English teacher stated that “after watching the film, some students started picking up plastic bottles around the school compound without being told.” This, the teacher explained, was a sign that the lessons had moved beyond theory to influence behaviour.

The Yorùbá teachers also observed similar positive behavioural changes, particularly among students who could relate personally to the local contexts presented in the films and documentaries. They noted that when students saw familiar places affected by flooding, waste accumulation or deforestation, they began to understand that environmental problems were not distant or abstract, but real and close to home. One Yorùbá teacher mentioned that “students became more careful about how they disposed of waste because they saw in the documentary how dumping rubbish in gutters caused flooding in nearby towns.” Such awareness encouraged students to apply what they learnt to their daily lives, and in some cases, they even encouraged their peers and family members to act more responsibly towards the environment.

Teachers further explained that films and documentaries helped to nurture a sense of empathy and moral responsibility in students.

They observed that when students watched stories showing the suffering of people and animals as a result of climate change, they began to express concern and a desire to take positive action. For example, some students suggested planting trees around the school to reduce erosion, while others proposed using reusable bottles instead of disposable plastics. According to one English teacher, “students talked about wanting to do something, not just talk about it.” This enthusiasm, teachers noted, reflected a growing sense of agency and environmental citizenship among learners.

In addition, teachers highlighted that discussions following the film or documentary sessions provided opportunities for students to reflect critically on their own behaviour. Through guided questions and classroom dialogue, students began to identify harmful habits and suggest ways to change them. For instance, students mentioned turning off lights when not in use, avoiding the burning of refuse, and advising others to care for trees and animals. Teachers believed that this reflective engagement was essential in helping students internalise climate-conscious values.

However, a few teachers mentioned that not all students showed immediate behavioural changes. Some still needed continuous reminders and reinforcement through subsequent lessons and school activities. They suggested that environmental education using films and documentaries should be sustained over time, with follow-up projects that allow students to practise what they learn. In their view, consistent exposure would help to strengthen the desired behavioural transformation.

The responses of the fourteen teachers demonstrated that films and documentaries have a strong influence on students’ attitudes and behaviours towards climate action. They not only raise awareness but also motivate learners to act responsibly and advocate for environmental protection. Both English and Yorùbá teachers concluded that integrating these visual materials into language instruction helps bridge the gap between knowledge and action, leading students to become more environmentally conscious individuals who contribute positively to their schools and communities.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study reveal that the use of films and documentaries in the language classroom has a strong positive impact on students' understanding of climate change and their motivation to engage in environmental advocacy. The students' favourable responses, reflected in high mean scores for comprehension, motivation, and language use, confirm that multimodal resources can make abstract environmental concepts more concrete and relatable. This outcome supports the view of Sánchez-Auñón (2023), who found that films can deepen students' conceptual and emotional engagement by merging linguistic input with visual storytelling. Similarly, Akinwale (2022) emphasised that when learners encounter moral and environmental themes through familiar cultural narratives, as seen in Nigerian film productions, their learning becomes more authentic and impactful.

The strong agreement among students that films and documentary improved their understanding of environmental issues aligns with earlier research that views audio-visual media as effective in simplifying complex topics. According to Bello and Adeyemi (2023), students comprehend sustainability themes better when instruction integrates visual narratives with classroom dialogue. Moreover, this study's finding that film-based lessons motivated students to act mirrors the conclusions of Okafor (2024), who argued that film and documentary materials promote environmental empathy and moral awareness among secondary school learners. The emotional and narrative appeal of films appears to help bridge the gap between knowledge and personal responsibility, fostering what Schofield (2022) described as "transformative environmental literacy."

However, the study also identified moderate enthusiasm regarding enjoyment and peer or family discussion. These outcomes may be linked to contextual and cultural factors. Some students might not find climate documentaries entertaining due to their serious tone or technical language, as noted by Ahmed and Liu (2023), who observed that environmental documentaries often evoke concern rather than enjoyment. Similarly, the relatively lower engagement in post-class discussions could stem from limited environmental awareness among families or communities, especially in developing

contexts where climate education is still emerging. This echoes the view of Falola (2023), who found that students' environmental discourse outside school often depends on the presence of shared cultural or institutional support for sustainability learning.

The teachers' responses complement the students' perspectives by confirming that films and documentaries are effective pedagogical tools for promoting climate awareness and advocacy. Teachers agreed that audio-visual resources made lessons more vivid and relatable, especially when teaching abstract topics such as deforestation, flooding, and pollution. This finding aligns with the argument of Johnson and Mensah (2024), who noted that visual media can bridge the cognitive and emotional dimensions of environmental learning by stimulating both understanding and empathy. The English teachers' emphasis on improved language skills also supports earlier findings by Martínez (2022), who highlighted that film-based instruction enhances vocabulary retention and discourse competence through contextualised use of language.

The Yorùbá teachers' emphasis on cultural relevance through local-language materials is a particularly important finding. It suggests that using indigenous-language films or dubbed versions can deepen student engagement and comprehension, as also suggested by Adesina (2023), who found that culturally grounded media promote sustainable attitudes more effectively than foreign content. This aligns with the principle of linguistic relatability proposed by Olaoye (2024), which holds that students learn more meaningfully when the instructional materials reflect their lived realities. The teachers' observation that locally set films inspired stronger student responses further validates this position, showing that contextual familiarity enhances emotional identification and moral reflection.

At the same time, the teachers acknowledged certain challenges, such as limited access to suitable film materials, poor audio-visual facilities, and students' difficulty in understanding foreign accents. These barriers have also been documented in similar studies. For instance, Nwosu (2022) noted that many Nigerian schools lack the technological infrastructure necessary for consistent integration of film-based pedagogy, while Boateng and Asare (2023) identified

linguistic and cultural barriers in imported educational films as limiting factors in African classrooms. Such challenges help explain why the level of student engagement varied in this study, particularly in the enjoyment and peer-discussion dimensions.

Another notable finding is the behavioural change observed among students after film-based instruction. Teachers reported that learners became more environmentally conscious, participating in clean-up campaigns, tree planting, and energy conservation. This observation supports the findings of Meyer and Khan (2024), who noted that environmental films can instil a sense of agency and civic responsibility among youth audiences. The process of seeing real communities affected by climate crises may evoke what Kim (2023) termed “eco-empathic awareness,” motivating students to act beyond classroom discussions. However, the gradual and uneven behavioural changes observed suggest that consistent reinforcement through curriculum design and community-based projects is necessary, a recommendation also made by Udoh (2025) in his study on sustainability pedagogy in Nigerian schools.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study found that using films and documentaries in language teaching effectively promotes climate awareness, environmental understanding, and advocacy among secondary school students. Learners developed stronger knowledge of climate change, improved language skills, and showed more positive attitudes towards environmental protection, while teachers valued the approach for making lessons engaging and relatable. However, challenges such as limited enjoyment, few post-class discussions, and lack of audio-visual resources were noted. Based on these findings, it is recommended that film and documentary-based modules be integrated into English and Yorùbá language curricula to enhance both language learning and environmental awareness. Teachers should receive regular training on selecting and using audio-visual materials effectively through workshops on digital pedagogy and sustainability education. Furthermore, more locally produced climate-related films and documentaries in indigenous languages should be developed to ensure cultural relevance and stronger student engagement, thereby fostering empathy, responsibility, and sustainable values among learners.

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