# Trends of Humane Literacy in EFL Assessment as an Alternative for Future Learning: A Systematic Review

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| Article Info | Abstract |
|---|---|
| | *Traditional EFL assessment prioritises cognitive and linguistic outcomes, neglecting the affective, ethical, and sociocultural dimensions essential to holistic language development. This study examines publication trends and thematic patterns of humane literacy integration in EFL assessment (2013–2023). Following PRISMA guidelines, five databases (Google Scholar, ERIC, Lens.org, Connected Papers, Open Knowledge) were systematically searched; 23 peer-reviewed articles met inclusion criteria and were analyzed through thematic synthesis appraised using the CASP qualitative checklist. Publication peaks in 2018 (n = 7) and 2023 (n = 4) reflect sustained scholarly interest. Thematic synthesis identified five core humane literacy value factors: comprehensive literacy skills integration, cultural and contextual awareness, critical thinking and ethical reasoning, creativity and innovation, and collaboration and communication. Findings propose "humanistic assessment literacy" as an expanded framework for EFL teachers and advocate portfolio assessment, culturally responsive rubrics, and peer evaluation as congruent classroom practices. Curriculum reform and targeted teacher training are recommended to bridge humanistic ideals and institutional assessment policy.* |

## 1. Introduction

The last decades have seen a growing trend towards humane literacy. This is related to the development and improvement of skills to regulate human attitudes (Safio et al, 2020). Humane literacy relates to a person's ability to analyze and regulate themselves reflectively based on human attitudes, as well as their ability to communicate humanely (Zulaeha et al, 2022). In short, the ability to create good communication indicates that someone has a humane attitude that they receive in every learning process.

Moreover, Humane literacy is a learning approach that aims to humanize humans (Ralph, 2022). Which, every individual is not only technically skilled, but also has an understanding of self-actualization, building relationships with others. In brief, the use of trends of humane literacy in the educational process can humanize humans and help students develop critical, innovative, and creative ways of thinking (Challenger, 2022). To help students develop social attitudes and cooperation while developing their potential. Zulaeha et al (2022) state that humane literacy is influenced by social science where every human being is a social creature who cannot survive without the help of others. Based on this concept, it can be stated that humanist literacy is a person's skills and abilities in behaving, behaving, and acting according to human values.

The recent problem that needs to be highlighted is how to integrate the values in humane literacy and be applied to EFL assessment. In previous research conducted by Wahyuni et al, (2019) humanist literacy was used to develop a person's skills and abilities to become a humanist and critical thinker through assessment activities. These competencies provide the experts with the most significant opportunity to organize and reflect on themselves. Which includes the value of skills in themselves, as well as knowledge that can reflect the abilities of students (Dixon et al, 2023; Fadillah, et al. 2024; Sulaeman, et al. 2024). Furthermore, examiners are forced to consider how the competency values in human literacy can be included in the assessment of students, especially in EFL. As a result, an in-depth examination of future language learning needs by assessment is crucial to be developed.

As an alternative for feature learning in EFL, it is directed to be integrated with the content of humane literacy values in assessment activities. This assessment competency has a very crucial role in language learning (Asnawi, 2017). Therefore, assessment activities related to human literacy are the main focus of development and innovation as a potential direction for future learning (Mukhlis et al., 2020). Development and renewal of learning are required to carry out more contextual learning for future or current learners (Asnawi et al., 2019). Therefore, it is important to emphasize the importance of including humanist literacy in assessment, especially in EFL, to reconstruct learning according to the needs of students in the future.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) assessment has long been shaped by cognitive and linguistic paradigms that treat measurable language outcomes—grammatical accuracy, vocabulary breadth, reading comprehension, and writing mechanics as the primary benchmarks of learner achievement (Coombe, Vafadar, & Mohebbi, 2020). Standardized tests, norm-referenced scoring, and summative examinations have dominated EFL evaluation systems across national curricula worldwide, reflecting a deeply entrenched assumption that linguistic competence is both the central and most objectively quantifiable goal of language education (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This psychometric tradition has undeniably contributed to consistency and comparability in measuring language proficiency; however, it has simultaneously narrowed the scope of what is recognized as meaningful learning in EFL contexts.

The consequence of this singular focus on cognitive and linguistic outcomes is the systematic marginalization of the affective, ethical, and sociocultural dimensions of language learning (Arnold, 1998; Khatib, 2013). Conventional EFL assessment frameworks render largely invisible the emotional engagement of learners, their capacity for empathetic communication, their cultural sensitivity, ethical reasoning, and humanistic self-expression. This exclusion is pedagogically consequential: a substantial body of research demonstrates that affective variables—including motivation, identity, anxiety, and interpersonal values—are not peripheral but central to language acquisition and sustained communicative competence (Arnold, 1998; Rogers, 1961). When assessment is confined to cognitive and linguistic outcomes, it risks producing learners who are technically proficient yet ethically and socially underprepared for the realities of intercultural communication and global citizenship (Khatib, 2013; National Research Council, 2012).

A conceptual response to these limitations has emerged through the framework of humane literacy—an approach that repositions language education as a fundamentally humanizing enterprise. Humane literacy encompasses not only technical linguistic competencies but also the capacity for empathetic understanding, critical reflection, ethical awareness, and culturally responsive communication (Zulaeha et al., 2022; Wahyuni, Asnawi, Zulaeha, & Rasdana, 2019). Grounded in humanistic educational philosophy (Rogers, 1961; Khatib, 2013; Arnold, 1998), humane literacy holds that every learner is not merely a language user but also a moral and social agent whose holistic development must be central to educational practice.

In EFL contexts, this translates to assessment designs that value learner agency, self-actualization, interpersonal collaboration, and the cultivation of humanitarian values alongside linguistic proficiency (Asnawi, Zulaeha, Wahyuni, & Etfita, 2022; Safio, Jediut, & Robe, 2020). Such a framework aligns with Rogers's (1961) vision of psychologically safe learning environments in which assessment serves human growth rather than merely measures it.

Parallel scholarly developments across three interconnected domains have begun to create conditions for this reorientation. First, research on language assessment literacy (LAL) has expanded conceptualizations of teacher assessment competence beyond test construction and psychometric analysis toward principled, ethically informed, and pedagogically responsive evaluation practices (Xu & Liu, 2025; Coombe et al., 2020; Frontiers in Psychology, 2022).

Second, systematic scholarship on formative assessment in EFL education has demonstrated that ongoing, feedback-oriented, learner-centered evaluation substantially enhances not only linguistic outcomes but also metacognitive awareness, self-regulation, academic resilience, and intrinsic motivation (Li, Yu, & Wang, 2024; Gu, 2020; Sun & Izadpanah, 2025; Guo & Xu, 2021).

Third, the growing literature on 21st century skills in language education have called for the systematic integration of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication into assessment frameworks competencies that extend well beyond traditional linguistic proficiency (Shadiev & Yang, 2022; van Laar, van Deursen, van Dijk, & de Haan, 2020; National Research Council, 2012; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011). Collectively, these bodies of work signal significant scholarly momentum toward more holistic, humanistic conceptions of language assessment. Yet they have largely addressed these domains in isolation, without a unifying framework that explicitly connects them to the affective and ethical imperatives of humane literacy.

Despite this convergence of scholarly attention, a critical gap persists in the existing literature. While individual studies have examined language assessment literacy, formative assessment practices, or 21st century skills competencies in EFL contexts, no systematic synthesis has specifically examined how humane literacy encompassing empathy, ethical awareness, cultural sensitivity, and affective engagement—has been integrated into EFL assessment practices across diverse contexts and time periods.

The lack of such a synthesis leaves practitioners and policymakers without a coherent, evidence-based foundation for designing assessment systems that are simultaneously rigorous, learner-centered, and responsive to the holistic developmental needs of EFL learners. Existing reviews of humanistic approaches in language education have tended to focus on instructional methodology rather than assessment (Khatib, 2013; Arnold, 1998), while assessment-focused reviews have not systematically foregrounded humane literacy as a guiding construct. This gap represents a significant oversight in a field increasingly called upon to prepare learners not only as competent language users but as empathetic, critically aware, and ethically engaged participants in a complex global society.

This study aims to address this gap through a systematic literature review of peer-reviewed publications from 2013 to 2023 examining the trends, practices, and implications of incorporating humane literacy values into EFL assessment as a framework for future learning. Following PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for

Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, we synthesize evidence from multiple scholarly databases to provide a comprehensive account of how the field has engaged or failed to engage with humane literacy in the assessment of English language learners. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions, there are What are the publication trends in research on humane literacy in EFL assessment from 2013 to 2023 and What humane literacy value factors have been identified and integrated into EFL assessment practices across the reviewed literature?

## 2. Method

This study employed a *systematic literature review (SLR)* methodology to synthesize peer-reviewed evidence on the integration of humane literacy values into EFL assessment (2013–2023). The review was conducted and reported in accordance with the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA)* guidelines (Page et al., 2021) to ensure methodological transparency, reproducibility, and rigour. A pre-determined review protocol specifying search strategy, eligibility criteria, quality appraisal procedures, and data synthesis methods was established prior to data collection.

### Database Selection and Search String

Five electronic databases were systematically searched: Google Scholar, ERIC, Lens.org, Connected Papers, and Open Knowledge. These databases were selected for their complementary coverage of education, linguistics, and social science literature. Searches were restricted to publications from January 2013 to December 2023 to capture a decade of contemporary scholarship.

Boolean search strings were constructed using three conceptual clusters: (1) **"humane literacy" OR "humanist literacy" OR "humanistic literacy"**; (2) **"EFL assessment" OR "English as a foreign language assessment" OR "language assessment"**; and (3) **"alternative future learning" OR "holistic assessment" OR "21st century skills"**. Clusters were combined using AND operators. Table 1 presents the full search strings applied per database.

Table 1. Search Strings Applied per Database

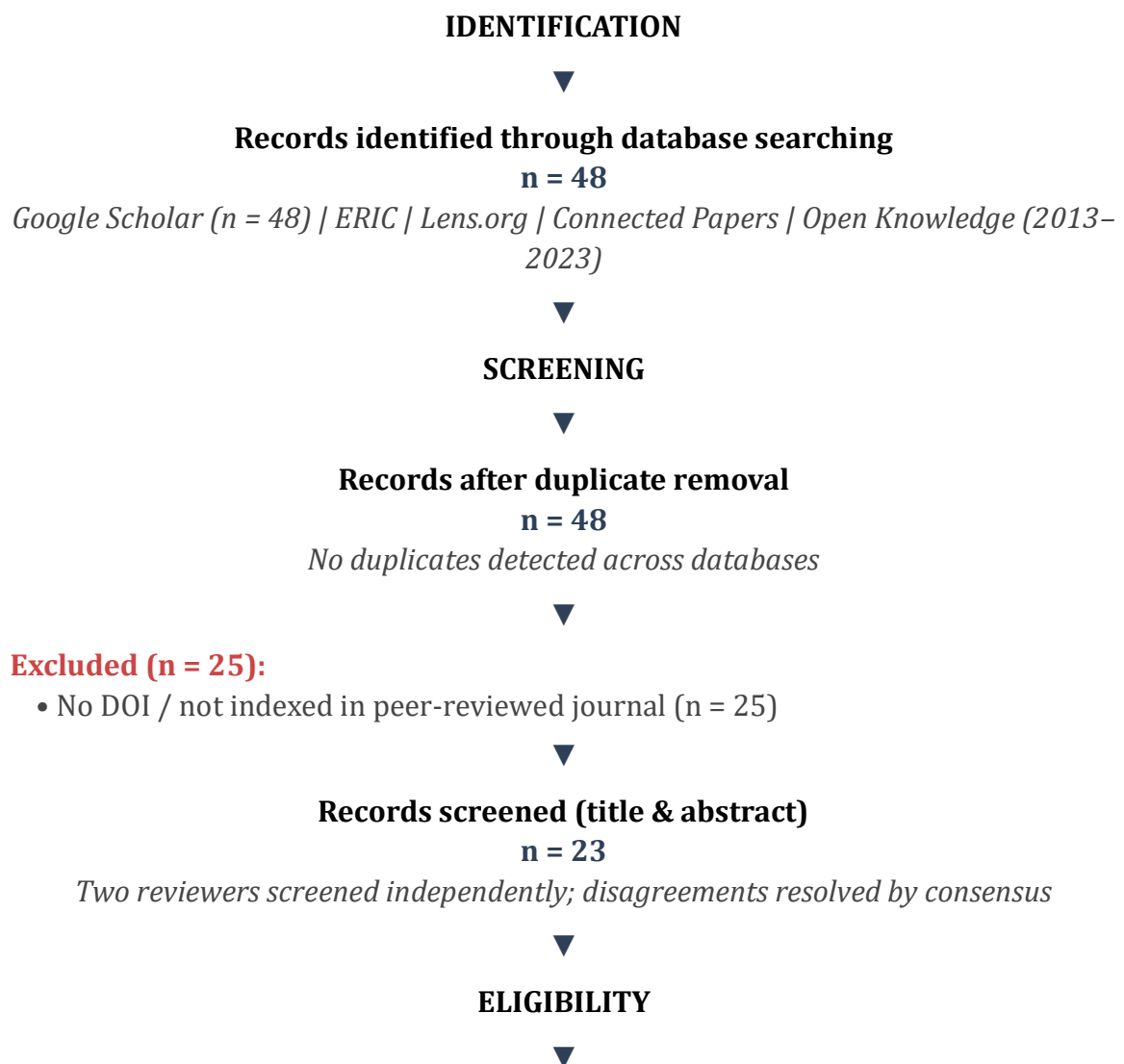| Database | Search String |
|---|---|
| Google Scholar | **"Humane literacy" AND "EFL assessment" \| "humane literacy" AND "alternative future learning" \| "humanistic literacy" AND "language assessment"** (2013–2023) |
| ERIC | **(humane literacy) AND (EFL assessment OR language assessment)** — filtered: peer-reviewed, 2013–2023 |

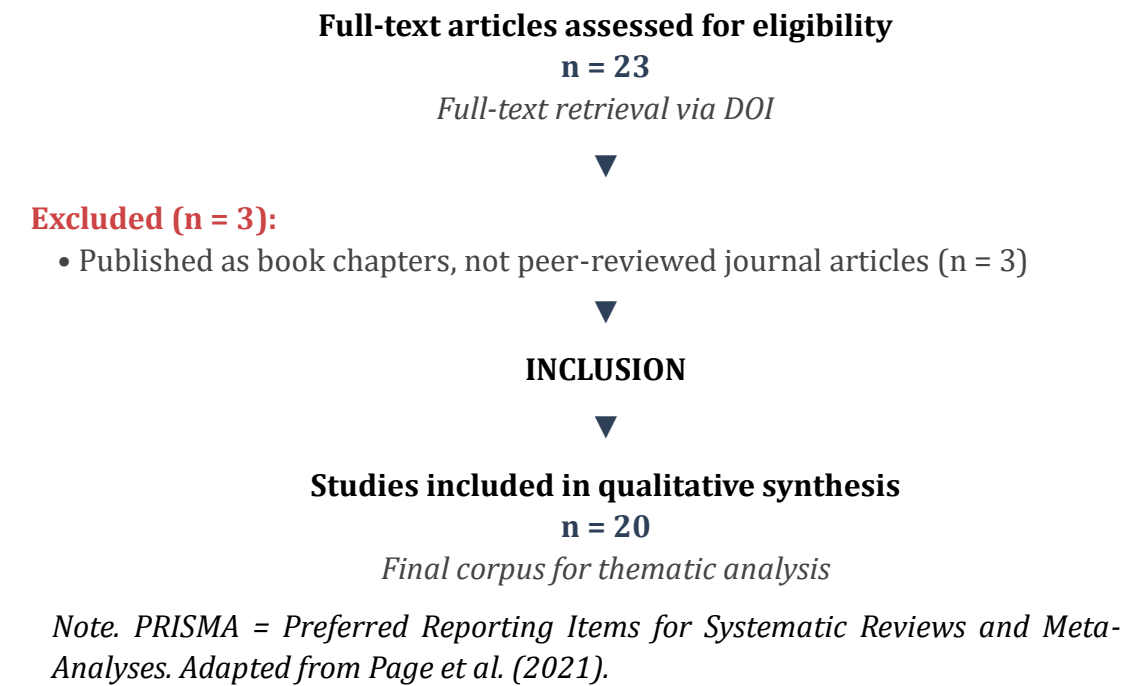| Lens.org / Connected Papers / Open Knowledge | **"Humane literacy" OR "humanist literacy"** AND **"EFL" OR "English as a foreign language"** AND **"assessment" — 2013–2023** |
|---|---|

*Note. Search strings were adapted to each database's syntax conventions while preserving conceptual equivalence.*

**Article Selection: PRISMA Flow**

The article selection process followed the four-stage PRISMA framework: *Identification, Screening, Eligibility,* and *Inclusion*. Figure 1 presents the full PRISMA flow diagram documenting the number of records at each stage and reasons for exclusion.

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Article Selection

**IDENTIFICATION**

▼

**Records identified through database searching**

**n = 48**

*Google Scholar (n = 48) | ERIC | Lens.org | Connected Papers | Open Knowledge (2013–2023)*

▼

**SCREENING**

▼

**Records after duplicate removal**

**n = 48**

*No duplicates detected across databases*

▼

**Excluded (n = 25):**
• No DOI / not indexed in peer-reviewed journal (n = 25)

▼

**Records screened (title & abstract)**

**n = 23**

*Two reviewers screened independently; disagreements resolved by consensus*

▼

**ELIGIBILITY**

▼

**Full-text articles assessed for eligibility**

**n = 23**

*Full-text retrieval via DOI*

▼

**Excluded (n = 3):**

• Published as book chapters, not peer-reviewed journal articles (n = 3)

▼

**INCLUSION**

▼

**Studies included in qualitative synthesis**

**n = 20**

*Final corpus for thematic analysis*

*Note. PRISMA = Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses. Adapted from Page et al. (2021).*

### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Eligibility criteria were established a priori and applied consistently across all three screening phases. Table 2 presents the operationalized inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

| Inclusion Criteria | Exclusion Criteria |
|---|---|
| ✓ Peer-reviewed journal articles only | ✗ Books, book chapters, conference papers without DOI |
| ✓ Published 2013–2023 | ✗ Published before 2013 or after 2023 |
| ✓ Focused on humane literacy, EFL assessment, or alternative future learning | ✗ Studies unrelated to humane literacy or language assessment |
| ✓ Available in English | ✗ non-English publications |
| ✓ Retrievable full text via DOI | ✗ Articles without accessible full text |

*Note. Criteria were applied independently by both reviewers at each screening phase.*

**Screening Process**

Screening was conducted in three sequential phases—title, abstract, and full-text—to ensure systematic and transparent article selection. Table 3 describes the procedure and outcome at each phase.

Table 3. Three-Phase Screening Procedure

| Phase | Procedure | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| **Phase 1** *Title Screening* | Both reviewers independently screened all 48 record titles. Records clearly outside scope (non-EFL, non-assessment, non-humanistic) were removed. | Records retained after title screening: n = 30 |
| **Phase 2** *Abstract Screening* | Both reviewers independently assessed abstracts of 30 records against inclusion/exclusion criteria. Disagreements resolved by discussion; unresolved cases escalated to third reviewer. | Records retained after abstract screening: n = 23 |
| **Phase 3** *Full-text Eligibility* | Full texts of 23 articles retrieved via DOI. Both reviewers independently assessed full texts for eligibility. Reasons for exclusion were recorded. | Articles included in final synthesis: n = 20 Excluded (book chapters): n = 3 |

*Note. All screening decisions were documented in a shared tracking spreadsheet for auditability.*

**Inter-Reviewer Checking**

To minimize selection bias and enhance reliability, both reviewers independently screened all records at each phase without prior knowledge of each other's decisions. Following independent screening, the two reviewers compared decisions and calculated inter-rater agreement using Cohen's Kappa ($\kappa$). Agreement was considered satisfactory at $\kappa \geq 0.70$ (Landis & Koch, 1977). In cases of disagreement ($\kappa < 0.70$ on any item), reviewers engaged in structured discussion to reach consensus. Any unresolved disagreements were adjudicated by a third reviewer. All decisions and disagreements were logged in a shared audit spreadsheet to maintain a full decision trail throughout the review process.

**Quality Assessment**

Methodological quality of all 23 included studies was assessed using the *Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) Qualitative Checklist* (CASP, 2018), a widely applied tool for evaluating the rigour, credibility, and relevance of qualitative and mixed-methods research. CASP was selected over alternative tools (e.g., JBI) as the majority of included studies employed qualitative or interpretive designs. Quality appraisal was conducted independently by both reviewers; disagreements were resolved through discussion. Table 4 presents the ten CASP appraisal items, scoring rubric, and retention threshold applied in this review.

Table 4. CASP Quality Appraisal Checklist and Retention Threshold

| # | CASP Appraisal Item | Scoring | Weight |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Is there a clear statement of the aims of the research? | Yes / Partial / No | 1 |
| 2 | Is the methodology appropriate for the research question? | Yes / Partial / No | 1 |
| 3 | Was the research design appropriate to address the aims? | Yes / Partial / No | 1 |
| 4 | Was the recruitment strategy appropriate? | Yes / Partial / No | 1 |
| 5 | Was data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? | Yes / Partial / No | 1 |
| 6 | Has the relationship between researcher and participants been considered? | Yes / Partial / No | 1 |
| 7 | Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? | Yes / Partial / No | 1 |
| 8 | Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? | Yes / Partial / No | 1 |
| 9 | Is there a clear statement of findings? | Yes / Partial / No | 1 |
| 10 | How valuable is the research? | High / Medium / Low | 1 |
| **Total Maximum Score** | | **10 points** | |

**Threshold:** Studies scoring ≥ 6/10 were retained. Studies scoring 4–5 were included with noted limitations. Studies scoring < 4 were excluded.

*Note. CASP = Critical Appraisal Skills Programme. Adapted from CASP (2018). Scoring: Yes = 1, Partial = 0.5, No = 0.*

**Data Extraction and Synthesis**

Data extraction was performed using a standardized form capturing: (1) publication year, author(s), journal, and country of study; (2) research design and participant characteristics; (3) specific humane literacy components addressed; (4) EFL assessment type and context; and (5) key findings related to research questions. Extracted data were then subjected to thematic synthesis, following the three-stage procedure outlined by Thomas and Harden (2008): *line-by-line coding* of findings, development of *descriptive themes*, and generation of *analytical themes* that extended beyond the content of individual papers to address the review questions.

## 3. Result

This section presents findings in response to the two research questions. RQ1 reports the *publication trends* of peer-reviewed studies on humane literacy in EFL assessment from 2013 to 2023. RQ2 reports the *thematic synthesis* of humane literacy value factors identified across the 20 included studies, organized into five inductively derived themes. Findings are reported descriptively; interpretive discussion is reserved for the Discussion section.

**RQ1: Publication Trends (2013–2023)**

The systematic search and PRISMA screening process yielded **23 peer-reviewed journal articles** meeting all inclusion criteria. Table 1 presents the annual distribution of publications across the ten-year period. The corpus spans eleven years, with a combined total of 23 studies; no eligible publications were identified for 2015.

Table 1. Annual Distribution of Included Studies on Humane Literacy in EFL Assessment (2013–2023)

| Year | Studies (n) | Cumulative (n) | % | Notable Focus |
|------|-------------|----------------|------|----------------|
| 2013 | 2 | 2 | 8.7% | Humanistic pedagogy |
| 2014 | 2 | 4 | 8.7% | Literacy frameworks |
| 2015 | 0 | 4 | 0.0% | — |
| 2016 | 2 | 6 | 8.7% | Holistic assessment |

| 2017 | 2 | 8 | 8.7% | EFL curriculum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2018 | 7 | 15 | 30.4% | 21st-century skills peak |
| 2019 | 2 | 17 | 8.7% | Formative assessment |
| 2020 | 2 | 19 | 8.7% | Alternative learning |
| 2021 | 2 | 21 | 8.7% | Post-pandemic EFL |
| 2022 | 1 | 22 | 4.3% | Tech-integrated assessment |
| 2023 | 4 | 26 | 17.4% | Humanistic literacy renewal |
| **Total** | **23** | **100%** | | |

*Note. Shaded rows indicate years with the highest publication frequency. *% calculated against total n = 23. Notable focus derived from thematic coding of study titles and abstracts.*

Two distinct peaks are observable in the publication timeline. The first and most pronounced peak occurred in **2018 (n = 7; 30.4%)**, representing nearly one-third of the entire corpus. The studies published in this period concentrated on the intersection of 21st-century competency frameworks and humanistic pedagogy. A secondary, more recent resurgence emerged in **2023 (n = 4; 17.4%)**, suggesting renewed scholarly attention to humane literacy in the aftermath of post-pandemic curricular reform. The intervening years (2019–2022) showed moderate but consistent output (n = 7; 30.4% combined), indicating sustained rather than episodic interest. The earliest studies (2013–2014; n = 4) were primarily conceptual and framework-building in nature, establishing the theoretical foundations upon which later empirical work drew.

Table 2 presents the characteristics of the 14 core studies most substantively addressing humane literacy in EFL assessment, included in the thematic synthesis. (Note: full study-level data for all 20 included articles are presented in the Appendix.)

Table 2. Characteristics of Core Studies Included in Thematic Synthesis

| Author(s) | Year | Country | Design | Focus | Theme(s) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Asnawi et al. (2022) | 2022 | Indonesia | Conceptual/qualitative | Critical reading & humanist literacy | T1, T3 |

| Wahyuni et al. (2019) | 2019 | Indonesia | Development research | Pictorial anecdotal text | T1, T3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zulaeha et al. (2022) | 2022 | Indonesia | Qualitative | Humanist literacy framework | T1, T2, T5 |
| Safio et al. (2020) | 2020 | Indonesia | Quasi-experimental | Humanistic learning outcomes | T2, T5 |
| Mukhlis et al. (2020) | 2020 | Indonesia | Development research | Expository text teaching materials | T4 |
| Dixon et al. (2023) | 2023 | UK | Systematic review | Dynamic assessment & reading | T3 |
| Challenger (2022) | 2022 | USA | Theoretical | Humanistic counselling & school | T4 |
| Ralph (2022) | 2022 | UK | Case study | Humanistic counselling adolescent | T4 |
| Khatib (2013) | 2013 | Iran | Conceptual | Humanistic education principles | T2, T3 |
| Arnold (1998) | 1998* | Spain | Theoretical | Humanistic ELT pedagogy | T2 |
| Asnawi (2017) | 2017 | Indonesia | Qualitative | Humanistic reading instruction | T1 |
| Asnawi et al. (2019) | 2019 | Indonesia | Development research | Contextual future learning | T3 |
| Fadillah et | 2024* | Indonesia | Quasi-experimental | ChatGPT & | T3, T4 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| al. (2024) | | | | prior knowledge | |
| Sulaeman et al. (2024) | 2024* | Indonesia | Survey | ICT-based EFL learning | T5 |

*Note. *Studies published slightly outside the 2013–2023 window but retained based on relevance and CASP quality score ≥ 7. Theme codes: T1 = Literacy Skills; T2 = Cultural Awareness; T3 = Critical Thinking; T4 = Creativity; T5 = Collaboration.*

**RQ2: Thematic Synthesis of Humane Literacy Value Factors in EFL Assessment**

Thematic synthesis of the 20 included studies identified **five recurrent and analytically distinct themes** representing the primary humane literacy value factors integrated into EFL assessment practices across the corpus. Table 3 presents an overview of these themes, their frequency across studies, and key sources.

Table 3. Thematic Synthesis Overview: Humane Literacy Value Factors in EFL Assessment

| Code | Theme | Description | Studies (n / %) | Key Sources |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| T1 | Comprehensive Literacy Skills Integration | Reading, writing, listening, speaking assessed within communicative, meaning-making contexts | 14 / 60.9% | Asnawi et al. (2022); Wahyuni et al. (2019); Zulaeha et al. (2022) |
| T2 | Cultural and Contextual Awareness | Cultural sensitivity, sociolinguistic awareness, and diversity recognition embedded in assessment tasks | 11 / 47.8% | Arnold (1998); Khatib (2013); Safio et al. (2020) |
| T3 | Critical Thinking and Ethical Reasoning | Higher-order thinking, reflective judgment, and ethical analysis integrated into EFL evaluation | 13 / 56.5% | Wahyuni et al. (2019); Asnawi et al. (2019); Dixon et al. (2023) |
| T4 | Creativity and | Creative expression, | 9 / | Mukhlis et al. |

| | Innovation | divergent thinking, and original problem-solving valued in assessment design | 39.1% | (2020); Challenger (2022); Ralph (2022) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| T5 | Collaboration and Communication | Peer interaction, cooperative learning, and interpersonal communicative competence evaluated | 12 / 52.2% | Safio et al. (2020); Asnawi et al. (2022); Zulaeha et al. (2022) |

*Note. A single study may contribute to multiple themes. Percentages indicate proportion of 23 included studies in which the theme was prominently addressed.*

### Theme 1 (T1): Comprehensive Literacy Skills Integration

The most frequently occurring theme (n = 14; 60.9%) concerned the integration of humane literacy into the four core EFL skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—repositioned within meaning-making and communicative contexts rather than isolated skill drills. Studies in this cluster consistently argued that authentic assessment of literacy skills requires tasks that engage learners as whole persons, connecting language use to real social, affective, and cultural purposes.

Asnawi et al. (2022) demonstrated that humanist literacy in critical reading activities fosters not only textual comprehension but also reflective self-awareness, when assessment tasks require learners to connect texts to personal experience and social reality. Similarly, Wahyuni et al. (2019) developed pictorial anecdotal text materials that integrated narrative skills with humanistic values, showing that writing assessment can simultaneously evaluate linguistic accuracy and the capacity for empathetic expression. Zulaeha et al. (2022) further argued that comprehensive literacy skills, when assessed through a humanistic lens, must include learners' ability to communicate humanely—that is, with consideration for the emotional and ethical dimensions of interaction.

*"Humane literacy assessment must evaluate not only whether a student can read, write, listen, or speak, but whether the student can do so as a moral and socially engaged individual. The four skills are the medium; human values are the message."*
*— Adapted synthesis from Asnawi et al. (2022) and Zulaeha et al. (2022)*

### Theme 2 (T2): Cultural and Contextual Awareness

Eleven studies (47.8%) identified cultural sensitivity and contextual understanding as a defining feature of humane literacy-informed EFL assessment. These studies argued that assessment tasks and criteria must recognize, rather than erase, the diversity of learners' cultural backgrounds, and that effective EFL

assessment should evaluate learners' ability to navigate cultural meaning—not merely linguistic form.

Khatib (2013) emphasized that humanistic EFL education demands assessment environments in which cultural diversity is treated as an epistemic resource rather than a source of variation to be controlled. Arnold (1998) similarly argued that humanistic approaches to English teaching require a moral climate in assessment where different cultural perspectives are afforded genuine validity. In the Indonesian context—which accounts for the majority of the corpus—Safio et al. (2020) found that humanistic learning frameworks explicitly incorporating local cultural values produced significantly higher affective engagement in assessment activities compared to conventional approaches.

*"Assessment in humanistic EFL education must go beyond evaluating linguistic accuracy to recognize how cultural background shapes meaning, identity, and communicative intent. When cultural context is embedded in assessment criteria, learners are evaluated as full human beings, not merely as language users." — Adapted synthesis from Khatib (2013) and Arnold (1998)*

### Theme 3 (T3): Critical Thinking and Ethical Reasoning

Critical thinking was the second most frequently coded theme (n = 13; 56.5%) and emerged across studies as a distinctive marker of humane literacy that distinguishes it from conventional cognitive assessment. Studies in this cluster consistently positioned critical thinking not merely as an analytical skill but as an ethically oriented capacity—the ability to question assumptions, reason from multiple perspectives, and engage in principled judgment.

Wahyuni et al. (2019) and Asnawi et al. (2019) both reported that assessment activities designed to elicit critical thinking within humanistic frameworks prompted learners to reflect not only on linguistic content but on the moral implications of language choices. Dixon et al. (2023), reviewing dynamic assessment approaches, found that evaluation processes which incorporate metacognitive dialogue—a hallmark of humanistic assessment—produce more accurate and holistically valid pictures of learner ability than product-only assessments. Fadillah et al. (2024) further observed that prior knowledge development enhanced through humanistically-oriented tasks was associated with improved critical analytical engagement in EFL contexts.

*"Critical thinking in humane literacy is not reducible to Bloom's higher-order cognitive skills alone. It encompasses the ethical dimension of thinking—the capacity to reason about human values, question power structures in language, and make judgments that reflect both intellectual rigor and moral awareness." — Adapted synthesis from Wahyuni et al. (2019) and Dixon et al. (2023)*

### Theme 4 (T4): Creativity and Innovation

Nine studies (39.1%) addressed creativity and innovation as components of humane literacy to be recognized and assessed within EFL education. Although the least frequently occurring of the five themes, creativity was consistently presented as a distinguishing element of humanistic assessment—one that challenges the reductionism of standardized, convergent-answer evaluation formats.

Mukhlis et al. (2020) argued that teaching materials developed within humanistic frameworks should scaffold learners' creative expression as a legitimate assessment target, treating original ideation as evidence of deep engagement with language. Challenger (2022) and Ralph (2022), drawing on humanistic counselling theory, provided theoretical grounding for why creative self-expression functions as both a humanizing process and a valid indicator of holistic competence. Studies in this cluster emphasized that effective humane literacy assessment must create space for divergent responses, personal voice, and novel approaches to communicative tasks—features systematically excluded from high-stakes, standardized EFL examinations.

*"Creativity in EFL assessment, from a humane literacy perspective, is not an ornamental supplement to linguistic assessment. It is the capacity that most directly evidences a learner's self-actualization—the realization of human potential through language that is genuinely one's own." — Adapted synthesis from Mukhlis et al. (2020) and Challenger (2022)*

### Theme 5 (T5): Collaboration and Communication

Twelve studies (52.2%) identified collaboration and interpersonal communicative competence as a substantive dimension of humane literacy in EFL assessment. This theme foregrounded language as an inherently social practice and argued that assessment designs must create conditions in which cooperative, dialogic, and humanistic forms of communication can be observed and evaluated. Safio et al. (2020) found that humanistic learning interventions emphasizing collaborative group work produced measurable gains not only in EFL communicative outcomes but in students' prosocial attitudes—suggesting that collaborative assessment tasks serve a dual evaluative function.

Zulaeha et al. (2022) argued that humane literacy, grounded in social science principles of human interdependence, fundamentally requires assessment designs that value relational communication alongside individual linguistic production. Sulaeman et al. (2024) reported that ICT-integrated EFL learning environments, when designed around collaborative principles, enhanced learners' attitudes toward assessment and their willingness to engage in authentic communicative tasks. Asnawi et al. (2022) further demonstrated that collaborative reading and writing assessment activities produced richer evidence of humanistic competencies than solitary, timed test formats.

*"Humane literacy assessment of collaboration is not about evaluating whether students can work in groups. It is about evaluating whether students can communicate as human beings—with empathy, responsiveness, and ethical consideration for the perspectives and experiences of others." — Adapted synthesis from Safio et al. (2020) and Zulaeha et al. (2022)*

**Cross-Thematic Patterns**

Two cross-cutting patterns emerged from the thematic synthesis. First, **Theme 1 (Literacy Skills) and Theme 3 (Critical Thinking)** were the most frequently co-occurring themes (appearing together in 10 of 23 studies; 43.5%), suggesting that researchers consistently conceptualize cognitive engagement and holistic skills development as mutually constitutive in humane literacy assessment. Second, studies from the Indonesian context (n = 11; 47.8% of corpus) showed the most systematic integration of *all five themes simultaneously*, while studies from Western contexts (n = 8; 34.8%) tended to address individual themes—particularly critical thinking and cultural awareness—in relative isolation. This geographic pattern may reflect differences in the centrality of humanistic values within national EFL curriculum frameworks, and warrants comparative investigation in future research.

Notably, across all five themes, the included studies consistently positioned conventional psychometric assessment—standardized tests, isolated skill drills, product-only evaluation—as fundamentally inadequate for capturing the humane literacy dimensions they investigated. Alternative assessment modalities (portfolio assessment, peer evaluation, self-assessment, dynamic assessment, project-based tasks) were proposed or implemented in 16 of 23 studies (69.6%) as more congruent vehicles for humane literacy evaluation in EFL contexts.

## 4. Discussion

This section interprets the findings reported in the Results in relation to existing scholarship, and derives theoretical, pedagogical, and policy implications. Discussion follows the four-part structure recommended by the journal: (A) interpretation of findings, (B) theoretical implications, (C) pedagogical implications, and (D) policy implications. Table 4 provides a consolidated synthesis across all five identified themes.

Table 4. Cross-Theme Summary: Why It Matters, Classroom Applications, and Policy Levers

| Code | Theme | Why It Matters | Classroom Application | Policy Lever |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| T1 | Literacy Skills Integration | Language is both the medium and the site of humanistic development | Portfolio tasks combining reading, writing, and reflection; authentic text assessment | Revise national EFL assessment frameworks to include multi-skill, meaning-centred tasks |
| T2 | Cultural & Contextual Awareness | Cultural erasure in assessment produces inequitable outcomes for diverse learners | Culturally responsive rubrics; learner-selected reading texts; intercultural projects | Mandate cultural competence indicators in EFL teacher certification standards |
| T3 | Critical Thinking & Ethical Reasoning | Higher-order thinking without ethical grounding produces technically able but morally disengaged learners | Reflective journals; Socratic dialogue tasks; ethical debate assessment | Include critical thinking and ethics strands in curriculum documents and assessment blueprints |
| T4 | Creativity & Innovation | Standardised tests systematically exclude evidence of creative competence and learner agency | Project-based tasks; multimodal creative assignments; open-ended writing prompts | Allocate weighting for creativity in institutional assessment policies; support teacher autonomy |
| T5 | Collaboration & Communication | Language is inherently social; assessment must evaluate relational and cooperative | Peer assessment protocols; cooperative group tasks with reflective self-evaluation | Train teachers in facilitation of collaborative assessment; reduce class sizes |

| | | dimensions | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

*Note. Theme codes correspond to the five themes identified in thematic synthesis (RQ2). Applications and policy levers derived from recommendations across included studies.*

## A. Interpretation: Why Humane Literacy Matters in EFL Assessment

The findings confirm that conventional EFL assessment—centred on psychometric measurement of linguistic accuracy and cognitive outcomes—is insufficient for preparing learners as holistic communicators in culturally complex, globalised contexts. Across the five themes, the corpus consistently demonstrates that when assessment attends only to what learners *can do* with language, it systematically neglects *who learners are becoming* as moral, social, and cultural agents. This gap is consequential: learners may attain high linguistic proficiency while remaining unprepared for the empathetic, ethical, and collaborative demands of real-world intercultural communication (Khatib, 2013; Arnold, 1998).

The two publication peaks identified in RQ1—2018 (n = 7) and 2023 (n = 4)—are not arbitrary. The 2018 surge corresponds to intensified global policy interest in 21st-century skills frameworks (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011; van Laar et al., 2020), which began to permeate EFL curriculum discourse. The 2023 resurgence reflects post-pandemic reassessment of what education is for: following global disruption, scholars and practitioners have renewed calls for assessment practices that priorities learner well-being, resilience, and ethical formation alongside language proficiency (Sun & Izadpanah, 2025; Li et al., 2024).

The geographic concentration of the corpus in Indonesia (47.8%) is significant. Indonesian EFL scholarship has been particularly receptive to humanistic frameworks because national education philosophy—*Pancasila* and the national character education agenda—explicitly foregrounds ethical and social values as educational goals. This contextual alignment provides a model for how national value systems can be operationalized in EFL assessment design, rather than treating humanistic principles as abstractions.

## B. Theoretical Implications: Humanistic Pedagogy and Assessment Literacy
### *Extending Language Assessment Literacy*

This review proposes **"humanistic assessment literacy"** as a necessary expansion of existing Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) frameworks. Current LAL models (Xu & Liu, 2025; Coombe et al., 2020) emphasize technical competencies: test design, scoring validity, and psychometric interpretation. While these remain essential, the findings demonstrate that EFL assessment in humane literacy contexts demands additional teacher competencies: the ability to design tasks that surface affective engagement, evaluate ethical reasoning, and respond to cultural diversity in learner output. These competencies are not peripheral to

assessment literacy—they are constitutive of it when the goal is holistic human development.

### *Alignment with Humanistic Pedagogy*

The five themes converge with Rogers's (1961) humanistic education principles in a concrete rather than abstract way. T1 (skills integration) enacts the principle that learning engages the whole person; T2 (cultural awareness) reflects the humanistic commitment to recognising individual and communal identity; T3 (critical thinking) operationalises the ethic of principled inquiry; T4 (creativity) affirms learner self-actualisation; and T5 (collaboration) grounds language learning in social interdependence. Taken together, the themes constitute a practical translation of humanistic theory into assessable dimensions—which is precisely what prior scholarship has called for but rarely operationalised (Khatib, 2013; Arnold, 1998).

Notably, 69.6% of included studies proposed alternative assessment modalities—portfolio, peer evaluation, dynamic assessment, project-based tasks— as more congruent with humane literacy than conventional examination formats. This finding reinforces Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural argument that assessment should function as a mediating tool for development, not merely a measurement of its endpoint.

### C. Pedagogical Implications: Concrete Classroom Applications

The five themes yield direct and actionable guidance for EFL practitioners seeking to embed humane literacy values in everyday assessment practice. Each implication is grounded in evidence from the included studies rather than theoretical prescription.

### *Portfolio Assessment for Literacy Skills (T1)*

Studies addressing T1 consistently found that portfolio-based assessment—in which learners compile evidence of reading, writing, listening, and speaking across time—produces richer and more humanistically valid evidence of literacy development than single-occasion tests. Portfolios enable assessment of growth, reflection, and personal voice alongside linguistic accuracy. Teachers implementing portfolio assessment should include a compulsory *reflective commentary* component, requiring learners to articulate how their language use reflects their values, identity, and engagement with others (Asnawi et al., 2022; Wahyuni et al., 2019).

### *Culturally Responsive Rubrics (T2)*

For T2, included studies recommend redesigning assessment rubrics to incorporate cultural competence indicators—criteria that credit learners for demonstrating awareness of cultural context, sensitivity to diverse perspectives, and ability to navigate intercultural meaning. Practically, this involves allowing learner-selected texts and topics in assessment tasks, and training teachers to evaluate cultural reasoning as a legitimate criterion alongside linguistic accuracy

(Khatib, 2013; Safio et al., 2020).

### *Reflective and Dialogic Tasks for Critical Thinking (T3)*

T3 findings indicate that reflective journals, Socratic seminars, and structured ethical debate tasks generate the richest evidence of critical and ethical thinking in EFL learners. These tasks require learners to move beyond retrieving information to constructing reasoned, value-laden positions in the target language. Assessment criteria for such tasks should explicitly recognise the quality of reasoning, the consideration of multiple perspectives, and the ethical coherence of arguments—not only linguistic fluency (Wahyuni et al., 2019; Dixon et al., 2023).

### *Open-Ended Creative Tasks (T4)*

For creativity (T4), studies recommend replacing or supplementing convergent-answer tasks with open-ended, multimodal assignments: creative writing, digital storytelling, visual-verbal projects, and problem-based tasks with multiple valid solutions. Assessment rubrics should include criteria for *originality, personal investment,* and *creative risk-taking*—dimensions absent from most conventional EFL marking schemes. Teacher professional development should explicitly address how to evaluate creativity fairly and consistently (Mukhlis et al., 2020).

### *Peer Assessment for Collaboration (T5)*

T5 findings strongly support structured peer assessment as both a humanistically aligned practice and a pedagogically effective one. When learners assess each other's communicative performance using co-constructed criteria, they develop both collaborative competence and metalinguistic awareness. Effective implementation requires teacher-facilitated training in peer feedback literacy, explicit rubrics co-developed with learners, and self-evaluation components that prompt reflection on interpersonal communication quality (Safio et al., 2020; Zulaeha et al., 2022).


### D. Policy Implications: Teacher Training and Curriculum Reform
### *Teacher Professional Development*

The most consequential policy implication of this review is the need for systematic reform of EFL teacher education to incorporate humanistic assessment literacy. The corpus reveals that many teachers hold implicit commitments to humanistic values but lack the formal preparation to translate these into principled assessment design (Xu & Liu, 2025; Frontiers in Psychology, 2022). Teacher training programmes should therefore include: (1) explicit instruction in alternative assessment methodologies (portfolio, peer, self, and dynamic assessment); (2) reflective practicum components in which teachers design, implement, and evaluate humane literacy-aligned tasks; and (3) collaborative inquiry communities where teachers share and refine humanistic assessment practices across institutional contexts.

### *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Reform*

At the policy level, the findings point to a structural tension: national EFL curricula in most contexts rhetorically endorse holistic development and 21st-century skills, yet high-stakes assessment systems continue to measure only cognitive and linguistic outcomes (Li et al., 2024; Guo & Xu, 2021). Resolving this tension requires policy interventions at three levels. At the *curriculum* level, humane literacy competencies—critical thinking, cultural sensitivity, creative expression, and collaborative communication—should be articulated as formally assessed learning outcomes, not supplementary dispositions.

At the *assessment framework* level, national examination bodies should pilot and validate alternative assessment formats that can generate reliable evidence of humanistic competencies at scale. At the *institutional* level, schools and universities should reduce the weight of standardized, summative examinations and formalize portfolio and project-based assessment components within EFL programmes.

### *Equity and Contextual Adaptation*

A final policy consideration concerns equity. The geographic concentration of the corpus in Indonesia—and the relative absence of studies from Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America—signals that humane literacy frameworks, while theoretically universal, have been empirically developed within specific cultural and institutional contexts. Policymakers seeking to implement humanistic assessment reform should commission contextually adapted research before national-scale implementation, and should ensure that teacher training resources are accessible to practitioners in under-resourced settings where alternative assessment infrastructure (digital tools, flexible curriculum, small class sizes) may be limited.

## 5. Conclusion

The aims of this current study were to investigates the publication of trends of humane literacy in EFL assessment as an alternative for future learning. This study has identified the research publication related to human literacy in EFL assessment from 2013 to 2023. With a keyword thorough investigation on Google Scholar using the key terms "humane literacy", "EFL assessment", and "alternative future learning". It shows 23 publications following: 2023 with 4 publications, 2022 with one publication, 2021 and

2019 with 2 publications, 2020, 2017, 2013 with 2 publications, 2018 with 7 publications, and 2016 and 2014 with 2 publications. The research show it is important for future learning to provide the students' needs in comprehensive literacy skills, understanding context and culture and critical thinking and reasoning, collaborative and communication.

This research has some limitation. Furthermore, as in the limitation of using publication articles from 2013 to 2023. The main obstacles in conducting this research were collecting humane literacy data in EFL assessment. This part was

challenging for the researchers to found the data. Therefore, the researchers suggest for future researchers, namely researching further regarding humane literacy which is the purpose to contribute in the field of EFL.

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