



# The Climate Connection

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## Episode 2: Speaking youth – to power

### Transcript

#TheClimateConnection

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You can find the show notes and a link to the podcast at <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/podcast>

**Duration: 0:45:40**

**Quote:** There's a large group of people who are often left out of the climate conversation. There's so much that we can be learning from indigenous communities around the world, for example, who despite contributing the least to climate change are facing some of the worst effects.

**Quote:** Let's be brave enough, like my very young nephew, three years old yesterday was going around the house and was telling me: be brave, be brave. Okay, so we should be brave!

**Quote:** I always try to remain optimistic about the future especially because I work with so many amazing young people every single day, who really give me hope that even if our current governmental leaders aren't taking the climate crisis seriously, that the next generation of leaders, absolutely will.

**Intro:** The British Council presents: The Climate Connection

Climate action in Language Education. This is Episode Two: Speaking Youth to Power.

**Chris Sowton:** Hello, and welcome to the climate connection, a British Council podcast focusing on climate action in Language Education. I'm your host, Chris Sowton. This is episode two: speaking youth to power; how young people are fighting the climate crisis.

**Chris Sowton:** Our first interview this week is with one such activist who has been actively involved in climate related projects and advocacy work. Jouja Maamri is the director of Impact Regenerative Creations, an impact fund investing in companies that enable a better and more sustainable world. She is also the UK delegate to the G7 Youth Summit, where she covers climate policy. Welcome to the podcast, Jouja!

**Jouja Maamri:** Thank you so much for having me, Chris.

**Chris Sowton:** So, Jouja, perhaps we could begin by you explaining what your role is as the UK delegate of the G7 Youth Summit.

**Jouja Maamri:** So I am one of four UK delegates to the G7 Youth Summit this year, and the youth summit is one of the seven official engagement groups of the G7. So, we work to put together a list of policy recommendations in a communique with other delegates from the other G7 countries, and are ensuring that ministers and leaders are thinking of young people in policymaking. I think what's coming out most prominently is that some of the topics that young people are talking about aren't necessarily on or covered by the UK COP 26 presidencies five key campaign areas and one of those key ones is climate migration, and what climate displacement looks like. And another one is young people talking about



how they see climate change affecting to their local area so young people in coastal towns or young people in traditional farming households and what land management looks like and so I think it's really bringing out the fact that as much as we can talk about the climate crisis and, and we see pictures of disruption happening around the world, actually a lot of changes are happening in the UK and so it's been really great to be able to refocus on the way that the climate crisis is affecting young people in the UK specifically and hearing more about the problems that they're increasingly facing,

**Chris Sowton:** And do you think those issues would be similar in other countries that emphasis on the localised nature of how people are noticing about climate change which is taking place.

**Jouja Maamri:** I think so, I think for a lot of us in the UK, we sit in a position where maybe we haven't been faced with some of the really drastic effects of climate change so far. Yet there are people around the world who've been, you know, dealing with the consequences of the climate crisis for decades now. And so I think it's really important to recognise that even if we can't see it, that it's happening, but also to recognise how it is happening within our own communities and with our own country. And so looking at the more marginalised communities within the UK as well as the Global South, where a lot of the climate devastation is happening, we're looking at marginalised communities in the UK, and how they're already being affected by some aspects of climate change or climate crisis, particularly communities of colour are living in areas where there's higher rates of air pollution and that the medical and health consequences of that and just how far reaching it is and it doesn't just exist in sort of, okay, there's this one, catastrophic weather event, and and that's when we see climate change but rather in these every day impacts that are happening.

**Chris Sowton:** And like you say, with something like air pollution which isn't necessarily directly visible but obviously has a huge and significant impact not only on people's lives, but for example, on children's learning.

**Jouja Maamri:** Erm, I think there's a recent study that showed that your race is more indicative of whether you will be affected by air pollution than poverty and so really bringing in these other aspects of the climate crisis into the conversation I think for so long it's been siloed as an environmental issue, but really looking at it as wider than that.

**Chris Sowton:** And with some of the groups that you talk to, Jouja, do you get the sense that young people are optimistic or pessimistic about their futures with regards to the climate? Do they feel empowered to do things or is the feeling more and more of resignation?

**Jouja Maamri:** As cliched as it sounds, we, as young people are going, we're tomorrow's leaders, essentially, and we're going to inherit today's problems tomorrow. And so, I think, without us having a say in some of the policy that is being drafted or some of the decisions that are being made today, we're gonna have to deal with the consequences of either those policies not being inclusive enough, not being far reaching enough, not being radical enough. And so I think it's really important that young people do have more of a say, I think around any policy area to be honest but specifically climate.

**Chris Sowton:** And what role do you think teachers in the classroom have to play in bringing some of these issues to young people, allowing a space for the discussion of these



issues within the classroom?

**Jouja Maamri:** I don't believe I had a strong enough climate education, and very much my information around the climate crisis did not come from within the classroom. And so I think there's just more that can be done on a very simple level of increasing climate education. There was a survey recently that said just 4% of young people surveyed felt that they know a lot about climate change and so we really need to be changing that statistic and so I think teachers are in a really powerful position to do that. And I think we need to do it from a very interdisciplinary angle. So, you know, my experience was if we learned anything about the environment, it was very much sort of the science classroom or in geography but geography isn't even a compulsory subject after a certain age. It needs to be accessible and I think that the way that it can be the most successful is that it is embedded across the curriculum. A big part of that is also teacher training, and making sure that teachers get empowered to teach about climate change because that's another big issue - if teachers don't feel empowered to speak on a topic, then that's going to trickle down and affect the way that young people, sort of, receive that learning. There's a lot of discussions around eco anxiety in young people and I think it's also training teachers how to hold those conversations and hold space for those conversations around the climate crisis, in a way that keeps young people engaged. Climate education isn't just important because it helps young people understand how they can, sort of, adapt their own lives in response to the climate crisis but it's also because young people are going to be the people who are going to be coming up with the solutions - hopefully - to solve some aspects of this crisis and so I think it needs to be really empowering and young people need to feel like they can be part of the solution and that really starts in the classroom.

**Chris Sowton:** So in a sense, it's changing the narrative because it seems to be often when we talk about climate change or when it's in the news it's always negative - it feels oppressive and it can lead to, like you say this eco anxiety, but if we can flip the narrative around a little bit and talk more positively about it then, then that may impact again on, on young people and what they feel they are able to do.

**Jouja Maamri:** Yes, exactly. And I definitely don't have the answer to this, because I think there's, there's a fine line between, you know, really imprinting on young people the severity of this crisis that's important that needs to happen, it can't be seen as something that will happen, you know, in 50 years time and it's down the road and it's not going to affect young people in their lifetimes. But as you said, also making sure that it's done in a way in which young people don't then get scared and sort of run away from it and bury their heads in the sand, but rather feel like - okay this is something that I can be a part of helping to solve, and maybe a big part of that is, is really bringing out this narrative of being a collective, that we're sort of all in this together, even though some communities will be affected more by climate change than others. Like, let's bring ourselves together and collaborate - and collaboration really being the key here - to help create some of the solutions.

**Chris Sowton:** Perhaps one way of doing that as well with, with younger people is to focus on things like the green economy, and green jobs, perhaps I could ask you a little bit about if you see there's a link between climate literacy and financial literacy?

**Jouja Maamri:** Traditionally, they've both been sort of subject areas that young people have had a lack of access to in terms of education or at least traditional education, yet they're both subject areas that will massively affect the way young people live their lives. Post COVID we will be in a probably prolonged economic crisis, just like we are currently in



a climate crisis. So I think there's an element of similarity between the two in the sense that they're both under talked about yet, have massive effects on young people's livelihoods. But at the same time I also think they influence each other. And so if we can educate young people on how they can use their money for good, then that is so powerful, being able to understand that your money is your vote, and also that you don't have to be particularly wealthy, or be an investor or have a ton of savings in order to be able to use your money in this way so there's a great campaign called Make My Money Matter, which is about demanding that your pension is invested in a better future. I'm working with the Big Issue that have just launched their new climate solutions fund that can be accessed through a Junior ISA. So that's another way that young people can be using, you know, their spare change or any savings they do have to be investing in companies that are positively contributing to solving the climate crisis. I think there's a lot of conversation around the differences and validity, I guess, between individual actions - so things that we can change in our own lives, so not using plastic straws being an example of that. And then the types of changes that need to happen on a much larger and generally corporate level, that will really make that shift happen. And I think this is a great way to do both at the same time so it's you know, using your individual power as a consumer, to be able to influence the big changes on a corporate level, because in reality a lot of young people don't have influence or power in corporate decision making, or in the business world, but actually if we recognise the power that we have collectively as consumers, and leverage that so that we are making sure that we're saying, actually no, I don't want to invest in a company that is still using fossil fuels, or I don't want my pension to be sitting in an investment fund invest in companies that still use fossil fuels, I think it's a really powerful way for young people to be able to be making a difference, even with a very small amount of money.

**Chris Sowton:** And if I could ask you more, sort of, generally, Jouja, on this podcast we're also interested in the relationship of language and the English language with the climate crisis, from your experience in your work as UK delegate to the G7 Youth Summit and also more widely in your professional life, how do you see the role of language impacting the climate crisis?

**Jouja Maamri:** There's a big piece of education that can be done around the language we use. In terms of the climate crisis, like a lot of different things climate and the environment can often be laden with acronyms and complex terminology and that can be very inaccessible to a lot of young people, but to especially young people from maybe more marginalised communities and so I think we need to think really carefully about how we talk about what's happening. A lot of people are adopting the phrase climate emergency. There are problems that come out of using the term emergency and what that means in already quite militarised context and how emergency or climate emergency can be used in certain countries as a way to prolong states of emergency, etc. So I think really thinking intentionally about the language we use is so important, and also to say that it's not just about the words that we're using and the terminology that we're using in English when we're talking about the climate crisis, but it's also the languages that we are using to talk about it in. So for example, the Y7 is predominantly in English, and a lot of these conversations happen, predominately in English or other major world languages. And because climate change is not constrained to any one border, and it really needs the involvement of people all around the world in order to come up with solutions, it means that we need to be having discussions in a wide variety of languages.

**Chris Sowton:** Jouja, thank you very much indeed for your time today.



**Jouja Maamri:** Thank you so much, Chris.

**Chris Sowton:** Thanks to Jouja for her time and for sharing her passion and knowledge about climate action. If you want to know more, you can listen to my full interview with Jouja at our website - [www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection](http://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection).

**Vox pop:** Hello everyone, I just want to share my thoughts on how including indoor plants in our classrooms has impacted our learning behaviour. We have 12 potted plants in each classroom, which helps revive clean air. This makes our passive learning into active learning, and I'm thankful for this. Thank you.

**Chris Sowton:** In this episode From The Field takes us to countries including India, and Turkey, via the small eastern European country of Moldova, as we hear from an inspirational project being run by META - The Moldova English Teachers Association - which brings together young people from around the world to discuss climate related issues.

## In The Field

I am the founder of Moldova English Teachers Association, and also the initiator of the eco core project in Moldova. When we started this back in August. I wasn't sure it will, anyhow work.

[Introduction of the students involved in the project from India, Moldova and Turkey]

We live in a world that allows us to make changes and take action. But despite all this progress, I am very surprised that the humanities still don't understand and deny the, one of the biggest problems we are facing, and I'm talking about the climate change. The environment is our home and I think homes should be treated, and must be treated, very carefully and thoughtfully.

The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it. So take actions, if you take small actions, it will be a bigger change tomorrow.

Since we're living in such a critical time where we are on the verge of witnessing the collapse of environment the structure, the human intervention. I feel like it plays a really big importance nowadays people are seeking to relax and have a good time. But as time passes, we're seeing more concrete jungles, than real jungles.

I want to talk about issues or issues we talked about are the same but the words are different.

Now when I see these wonderful kids here who are so, so enthusiastic about this and about this matter and they are ready to become volunteers to, I don't know, spread the word further to do some other actions and some other things which are very important for all of us.

It's happens very often that I hear people complaining about the difficulties they have to go through, in a way of fighting the climate crisis. And, of course, I cannot disagree because we really can't, can't see the government support in this fight, but that doesn't make it



impossible.

A couple years ago or a year, I participated in events for cleaning the environment and planting trees. I'm really happy with the work that they put in that time, and I'm planning to do something similar as soon as possible, as all my day to day life, I certainly recycle everything I can - aluminium cans, plastic bottles, plastic wrapping - everything.

It's a great thing to spread awareness because there are many people who are not worrying about the changes which are going to happen in the world in the future. I tried to create awareness with my friends, families, and they were like, oh, like thank God you told me we were not knowing these all things, so I was like, Okay, you should know this and you should plant some trees. So, like, they all done it, they had all done it, and I felt very happy. Like, it's another kind of happiness if we plant some trees and plants. It's a very different kind of happiness.

Last year I spent my time mostly at home because of COVID 19 pandemic, but I tried to change my lifestyle. I tried to attend different youth organisations. I recycled different materials, try to save water and electricity.

To have a secure future and to have a clean planet around us in the next 50 years, we're to start teaching the future generation that this is the most important topic to be paid attention to. And that's why we've initiated a range of activities dedicated to this topic. To raise awareness, to make the youth, a part of the action, and part of the solution for the problem.

Hearing good different students, I found something about pesticide pollution, you know, I mean, I didn't even consider it an issue because I'm coming from a country where everything is natural we grow everything at home - therefore no pesticides, no harmful chemicals and that after the meeting I informed myself and understood that it is actually a real problem. And that's why I was very thankful and I'm more sure now that making such meetings international with people coming from other countries, is, is very important.

I'm really impressed how much I've learned from these meetings, to my surprise, alone even with training I still understand your different accents, just because these meetings were on international scale. Before this I interacted, mainly with native speakers of English, and that really limited me and my understanding so to say, and I'm really happy to become more experienced in this sphere.

It's a very great thing just for me to have a conversation with around the world and all these things are just having conversations with each other, like, I don't know, it's a very great thing and I feel very fortunate to be a part of this META Moldova. Thank you.

I recommend people to attend the meetings, the world is our world - it is so precious. Everyone has responsibilities. So those meetings are very important.

Ask not only for one or two people but for everybody, because we need to save our planet we need to do something.

Let's be brave enough, like my very young nephew, three years old yesterday was going around the house and was telling me: be brave, be brave. Okay, so we should be brave!

I think that if I change myself, if my mum changes herself, if my dad changes himself. We



make a big community, and therefore, the changes will come.

I feel inspired, I want to do more, now you've inspired me to continue. Thank you for that!

**Chris Sowton:** In our second interview this week, we speak to Sophia Kianni. Sophia is an Iranian American climate activist, she's the founder and executive director of Climate Cardinals, an international nonprofit with 8000 volunteers in more than 40 countries working to translate climate information into more than a hundred languages. She is also a spokesperson for Extinction Rebellion and represents the United States as the youngest member on the inaugural United Nations Youth Advisory Group on climate change.

So Sophia, Can you tell us about the work of Climate Cardinals and what motivated you to set up in the first place?

**Sophia Kianni:** Yeah, Climate Cardinals is an international youth led nonprofit working to make climate education more accessible to people who don't speak English, and I was really inspired to start it, after going to Iran in middle school and realising that my relatives knew very little about climate change because there was almost no information available in Farsi, which is their native language.

**Chris Sowton:** And what's your ambition for Climate Cardinals over the long term?

**Sophia Kianni:** I hope that Climate Cardinals will continue to translate climate information and then hopefully be able to disseminate that through school curriculum around the world. We've already translated over 500,000 words of climate information so it will be awesome if by the end of the year we're able to reach one million. And like I said, we really want to make sure that once we have this information translated that we're giving it to the relevant partners who can really help to teach it in schools and other educational manners.

**Chris Sowton:** So you're working a lot with schools at the moment and directly with teachers and students themselves - could you, sort of, explain that a little bit about the process of how it works?

**Sophia Kianni:** Yeah, the way that Climate Cardinals works is we have 8 thousand student volunteers in over 41 countries. And so they're the ones who translate the climate information for us in exchange for community service hours

**Chris Sowton:** And why do you see language as such an important component in the fight against the climate crisis?

**Sophia Kianni:** So of the 10 countries most vulnerable to climate change, nine of them are not majority English speaking. And so because there are so many people who are being disproportionately affected by climate change who don't speak English, I think it's very very important to have this information available in other languages, so that people who are most vulnerable to climate change effects really know what's happening to them and know what they can do and what their governmental representatives can do to avert this crisis.

**Chris Sowton:** And do you see a similar issue - say with the language at events like COP26 and so on, the dominant languages used are English or other dominant languages rather than minority languages. Would you like to see a change in policies in terms of the medium used in those discussions as well?





**Sophia Kianni:** Yeah, well, the UN provides their information available in the six UN languages but the six UN languages only account for about 50% of the world's - less than 50% - of the world's speaking population. So I would just generally like to see a greater outreach effort and more resources put towards commissioning translations. That doesn't necessarily mean that, like there needs to be additional discussions conducted in other languages, more so that those discussions that are happening should be translated into other languages, so that participants can watch it and understand what's happening.

**Chris Sowton:** You've just been appointed as a representative for the United States on the UN Youth Advisory Group on climate change. Could you tell us a little bit about what that role involves?

**Sophia Kianni:** Yeah so it's the Secretary General's Youth Advisory Group on climate change so I, along with six other young people from around the world, we meet with the Secretary General and give them feedback on his climate strategy for 2020 and 2021. And so we really just inform him on the work that we're doing and the consultations that we're holding with young people from around the world. And, in hopes to influence his perspective, to really take into account what young people are worried about

**Chris Sowton:** What are some of the things that young people are worried about? What are you hearing in those discussions?

**Sophia Kianni:** I think it really varies but a lot of the things that I've heard about is focusing on environmental justice, making sure that we're tackling environmental racism, and the fact that climate change disproportionately affects people of colour. And also focusing on gender and climate issues since the UN says that about 80% of the people displaced by climate change are women. So really taking this intersectional approach towards the climate crisis and making sure that we are helping the most vulnerable, is some of the common themes that I often hear when speaking to other young people. For me what I think is the best to do is to focus on environmental education because I'm not a yet policymaker, and I mean I haven't finished my university, and I still think there's a lot of work to be done in terms of climate change awareness, I mean, just a few years ago, 40% of adults in the world had never heard about climate change, and there's still a sizable portion of the US population that doesn't even believe that climate change exists, and so as a young person what I'm focused on is advocacy, and then after I finished my university studies then I'm really going to be focused on climate mitigation and implementation.

**Chris Sowton:** Just going back a little bit to when you were talking before about the Climate Cardinals clubs in schools and so on. What advice could you give to schools who might be interested in this programme or might like to set something up themselves?

**Sophia Kianni:** So anyone who is interested can go to the Climate Cardinals website and they apply to form a chapter in the community or in their school. And basically what you would do is you would translate documents that you think are pertinent for your community or other communities, similar to how I translated documents into Farsi to educate my relatives in Iran, people can do the same thing under adults supervision and get community service hours for that work.

**Chris Sowton:** This is a podcast made by the British Council. Who are a very different kind of organisation to Climate Cardinals, it was established in 1934, it has strong links to the



British government, and in terms of language, its emphasis is predominantly on English. What do you think organisations such as the British Council and others like that should be doing in terms of the language and the climate crisis?

**Sophia Kianni:** I think that for any organisations that have information that is relevant to the general international population, it's incredibly crucial to be translating that information into other languages so that other people can really become aware of the issues that are facing us, because obviously, like everyone is being affected by climate change but not everyone speaks English, and so it doesn't make sense to be continuing to broadcast this message in what really becomes kind of an echo chamber when there are so many people around the world who are living in communities that are really being hit by climate change, like, like we were talking about climate refugees, people who are living on coastlines, and they don't even know that what's happening to them is directly a consequence of climate change and inaction on climate change, and so I would say that, maybe not, like, it's not like 100% crucial and necessary for podcasts like this to be translated into other languages, especially because not every organisation has the resources to commissioned translations, but entities like the United Nations for governmental organisations that are commissioning reports that directly relate to what the state of our planet is and what we need to do in terms of climate ambitions, that's information that's relevant to the international general population. And so especially because those organisations have so many resources, I really do think that they have an obligation to be translating this information to make sure that it's accessible.

**Chris Sowton:** Are there are other ways, you think, that speakers of minority languages can be engaged more in the, in the process?

**Sophia Kianni:** Definitely. I think that we just need to make our decision making tables more inclusive and more diverse. I think that we need to broaden our searches when we're looking for representatives, when we're looking for people to come to international climate discussions to ensure that everyone's voices are included, including those who are the most vulnerable to climate changes effects and especially those who have first hand witnessed the impacts of climate change and can speak to it.

**Chris Sowton:** And are there things you think that policymakers in the Global North can learn from groups and individuals in the Global South?

**Sophia Kianni:** I think that everyone can learn something from people who share a different perspective than them. I think that's the kind of the beauty of things like the UN Youth Advisory Group where we have these seven people who come from different corners of the world with different experiences, different ages and different really backgrounds because we've all experienced the effects of climate change differently, we're all focused on different strategies in terms of mitigation and awareness, and so there's, we can all stand to learn something from people who share a different perspective than us.

**Chris Sowton:** finally Sophia, how important do you think the upcoming COP 26 is?

**Sophia Kianni:** I always try to remain optimistic about the future especially because I work with so many amazing young people every single day, who really give me hope that even if our current governmental leaders aren't taking the climate crisis seriously, that the next generation of leaders, absolutely will - at least that's my hope. And so I do hope that going into COP 26 we'll see that these people who genuinely care about climate change are given



the platforms that they need to talk about these issues and to put pressure on elected officials to take action. I think that in the US with the recent change in administration it's definitely heartening that we re-enter the Paris Climate Agreement, and so I think that we're at a different place now and hopefully a better place, and especially in wake of COVID-19 I think that there's a lot of things we can do to build back our economies greener and more sustainably. So I think that COP 26 will be a great launchpad to determine what the next steps really need to be to keep global warming under 1.5 degrees Celsius.

**Chris Sowton:** Thank you very much for your time, Sophia.

**Sophia Kianni:** Of course it was a pleasure. Thank you for having me.

**Chris Sowton:** Thanks very much to Sophia. You can find out more about Climate Cardinals and potentially get involved from their website [climatecardinals.org](https://climatecardinals.org)

## Vox pop

Talking about climate change is always difficult. In Colombia, the greatest challenge to these issues, would be to try to reduce the activities that affect it, such as the burning of fossil fuels, oil, gas and coal, and the removal of forests, among others.

**Chris Sowton:** In each episode of The Climate Connection, we explore the language of the climate crisis with our partners at Oxford University Press. In keeping with the main theme of this episode, the focus of the Green Glossary is perhaps the most famous youth climate activists in the world, Greta Thunberg.

## The Green Glossary

Hello, my name is Rosamund Ions and I'm an editor involved in revising the Oxford English Dictionary. Greta Thunberg's school strike outside the Swedish parliament captured the imagination of young people worldwide, so I thought we'd look at the impact the so-called "Greta Effect" has had on English. One of the many new terms we're currently considering for inclusion in the OED is school strike. It's a term that's been applied to various protests staged by teachers, parents, and students. There's evidence for this term going back to at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the Google Books Ngram viewer, which gives a graphic representation of the way usage of words varies over time, suggests that there was actually a peak in usage around 1971. It's fairly transparent in meaning, which is why it may not previously have been considered for inclusion in the dictionary. Yet it's probably thanks to Greta Thunberg and her fellow school strikers - who in turn sparked the global FridaysForFuture hashtag and the climate strike movement of the same name - that it's come to have a more specific meaning that may merit a dictionary entry.

School strike is an example of compounding, which is a very common way of forming new terms in English. We'll cover compounding in more depth in episode 5 when we discuss carbon footprint. But thinking about the "Greta effect" gives us the chance to look at some other ways in which terms enter the language. Firstly we can take a look at the use of names or proper nouns. These aren't usually included in a standard dictionary, but when the name of a person or place comes to be used in place of a common noun, it can sometimes enter the dictionary as what we call an eponym. Although sometimes names



become standalone words, as in the verb to boycott, more commonly a name gets used as the first element in a compound, as in Canada goose (a goose associated with Canada). Similarly in the language of climate change, we find “The Greta Effect”, or “The Attenborough Effect”, where the names of Greta Thunberg and David Attenborough are used to modify the noun “effect” to indicate the different ways in which each of them has had an effect on public awareness of the climate emergency. Before we consider an eponym for inclusion in the dictionary, we need to see evidence of it being used over a period of years, and in a consistent sense or senses, so at the moment it’s still too early to say whether we’ll include these ones, but we’ll continue to monitor them over the coming years.

Secondly, one of the most effective ways in which language has been used to engage the public in the debate over climate has been the use of metaphors and analogies. One of the problems with getting people to accept the reality of the climate crisis may be a lack of scientific literacy and understanding. This is especially true for older generations, for whom climate science was traditionally covered in school as a small part of geography, and in many cases then forgotten. When scientists start using long words, many people just stop listening. That’s why the term greenhouse effect has been such an effective analogy. Most people, whether or not they are scientifically literate, will have experienced the way a glazed building or a car heats up inside – sometimes to an unpleasant degree - when the sun is shining on it.

What you might find more surprising is that greenhouse effect has a longer history than the recent climate emergency. It’s a term that refers to the natural protective blanketing effect of atmospheric gases that has kept the earth at a higher – and therefore pleasanter – temperature than would otherwise be the case. Only in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century did it come to be associated with the excessive global warming caused by human emissions of those gases which in turn came to be known as greenhouse gases. Another problem with public engagement is the geographical distance between those who are the main culprits of the climate crisis, who are generally in economically developed countries, and those who have been suffering the worst effects of climate change (for example natural disasters, desertification and the need to migrate to more secure areas), who are generally in less developed nations. The average person in a richer country is often still living relatively comfortably, and may not feel that this is a problem that concerns them - until it’s too late.

The activities of climate-aware groups such as ‘Fridays For Future’ and ‘Extinction Rebellion’ aim to shake the complacency of these more fortunate people and governments. Some have used actions such as climate strikes and other forms of non-violent protest. Others have used words; for instance we’ve been monitoring the emergence of the term degrowth in challenging the orthodoxy of pursuing economic growth at all costs; we’ll discuss that in another episode. Some of the most powerful terms are metaphors such as ticking time bomb, overshoot, and tipping point. These are used to convey the idea that we’ve exceeded the planet’s limits and are in danger of reaching a disastrous point of no return. But there’s a slight danger with the use of these metaphors that they are so removed from the story they are trying to tell that, especially with repetition, they become meaningless.

Storytelling – one of the oldest uses of language that predates widespread literacy – has increasingly been used by documentary makers to give a human face to the individuals and



communities most affected by climate change, for instance those whose land and livelihoods have disappeared with rising sea levels, or those who've lost their homes or family members to forest fires.

One of the most powerful uses of metaphor and analogy I've seen was used by Fridays For Future. This uses a different kind of storytelling in the form of a short film in which a stereotypical white American family are shown happily going about their morning routines in a comfortable house in the suburbs, all the time strangely oblivious to the fact that large parts of their house are burning. It's a very powerful image, playing on the idea that the Earth is our home (an idea inherent in words beginning eco-, as we'll discuss in the next episode). It invites those who are currently comfortable in their home not to be complacent about that continuing to be the case in the current crisis, by drawing an analogy between our individual homes and the planet as a whole, and by questioning why we are so unconcerned about the crisis facing that wider home. The message appears only at the end of the film; it uses very few words, but it's all the more powerful for that. It consists of a phrase used by Greta Thunberg, and a one-word call to action, which appear over two silent full-screen captions at the end: Our house is on fire. React.

### Vox Pops

Hello everyone, I'm an English teacher from Delhi, India. I believe that any kind of progress my students make whether big or small, is always an achievement. So today, I'm going to talk about a well crafted climate related lesson in which I prepared students for an inter house talk show competition, where I choose the leading climate activist, Greta Thunberg to be interviewed. In the whole training, the students were asked to go through the videos of Greta and read about her. Though they had been given the script to prepare themselves, both as an interviewer and interviewee. But I believe that connect was required, and fully this connect worlds giant climate problems simultaneously built the training of the event. The show was also stolen by the interviewer, as he was grabbing the spotlight with his excitement to meet Greta. The best part was when Greta told the host that she set an example of not flying rather sailing to North America to attend the UN Climate Action summit. Sarcastically, the host replied that is impressive but he remembered he hadn't done it as a kid, and he would not do it now. So, the interview question answers the price of her background, parents reaction, controversy and message to young people. After a months training, it was a pleasure to see the knowledge of ecological crisis and its effect on our planet, incorporated in children. To my surprise, the girl who was playing Greta's role was exactly copying her emotions for the climate change. That is my learning to language for the planet, thank you.

**Chris Sowton:** We hope you've enjoyed this episode. If you would like bonus material show notes, or to download Episode One, in case you missed it, please go to our website, [www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection](http://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection). And please join us again for Episode Three Language Recycling, where we will be exploring what teaching and learning methods can effectively address the climate crisis. Until then, goodbye!

