BRITISH COUNCIL

The Climate Connection

Lesson plan

Storm coming!

Extreme weather; reducing global heating; news and media

Face-to-face teaching lesson plan

Suitable for use with lower secondary learners of English

CEFR level B2 and above

#TheClimateConnection
www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection

Storm coming!

Topic

Extreme weather; reducing global heating; news and media

Outcomes

- Raise awareness of increasing risk of extreme weather events due to global heating
- Review vocabulary of weather events, e.g. *hurricane*; collocations about weather, e.g. *heavy rains*, *advised to stay indoors*
- Listen for specific information
- Collaborate creatively on an awareness-raising event

Age group and level

Lower secondary students at CEFR level B2

Time

90 minutes approximately or two shorter lessons

Materials

- The lesson plan and learner material can be downloaded in PDF format.
- The audio can be downloaded in MP3 format.
- Before the lesson, print enough copies of the learner worksheet for every learner.
- Sticky notes

Introduction

This lesson is part of the Climate Action in Language Teaching series of engaging lessons about the climate emergency and biodiversity loss. It explores different topics connected to the crisis.

In this lesson, learners will learn extreme weather vocabulary and read and listen to news reports about weather events. They then collaborate in groups and role play an emergency meeting to save their town. This lesson would be suitable as a supplement to a unit on weather, geography or the environment; after a recent extreme weather event; or near World Meteorological Day on 23 March.

Procedure

1. Weather warm-up (5 mins)	• Write *What's the weather like?* on the board. Demonstrate the activity by asking a learner the question and getting their answer; then ask another learner the same question. If necessary, tell them that they can't repeat an answer that has already been given. Repeat this two or three times.
	• Put learners in pairs. Ask them to take turns to ask and answer the same question. They must answer the question in as many ways as possible, and if a learner can't think of a new answer, they lose.
	• When all the pairs have finished, test the class on different words by drawing pictures on the board to elicit the weather words.
	Suggested possibilities: It's raining/foggy/misty grey/overcast/cloudy/freezing (cold)/boiling (hot)/windy/stormy/hot and humid; The sun is shining; The wind is blowing; There are clear skies/big, black clouds.
2. Personalising questions and vocabulary review (10 mins)	• Elicit one or two 'extreme weather' types to check that learners understand the term. Make sure they all have access to a dictionary. Point to Exercise 2 and put learners in pairs to discuss the questions.
	• When most pairs have stopped speaking, nominate learners to answer the questions. You may want to explain that hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons are names for the same phenomenon, but that hurricanes form over the North Atlantic and Northeast Pacific Oceans, cyclones over the South Pacific and Indian Oceans, and typhoons over the Northwest Pacific Ocean. A blizzard is a snowstorm with strong winds. A tidal surge is a flood on the coast caused by an abnormal rise in the sea level because of a storm.
	• If the learners are finding question 3 difficult, you might ask them to research the question 'Are weather patterns changing?' or refer them to an interactive site such as https://www.carbonbrief.org/mapped-how-climate-change-affects-extreme-weather-around-the-world.
	• Conclude the discussion by identifying the most common weather problems in the learners' country or region.
3. Introduce weather-related collocations (10 mins)	• Point to Exercise 3 and explain that each item is an extract from a news report about a weather event. Ask the learners to identify which type of weather each extract is talking about. The gaps in the extracts are places, so the learners also have to guess where each weather event is happening. If necessary, tell them to ignore the words and expressions in bold.
	• Put learners in pairs to do this exercise so that they can discuss possible parts of the world where this weather occurs. Do the first as an example to make the instructions clear.
	Answers:

	1. Drought – many parts of the world are affected, e.g. India, Africa.
	2. Flooding – many parts of the world are affected, e.g. Europe, Latin America, Bangladesh.
	3. Forest fires – many parts of the world are affected, e.g. Australia, China, the US.
	4. Snowstorm/blizzards, e.g. Canada, Northern Europe and Russia, Japan, etc.
	5. Smog, e.g. cities in China, Iran
	6. Tornadoes, e.g. the US or Canada
	7. Tidal surges, e.g. Pacific Islands, Caribbean
4. Vocabulary search (8 mins)	• Explain that the words and expressions in bold in Exercise 3 are useful for talking about extreme weather. Point to Exercise 4 and ask the learners to find a synonym for each of the words or expressions a–h. Make sure they understand that there are expressions in bold that they do not need for this exercise. <u>Answers:</u> a. poor (ocean) conditions b. threat c. hazardous d. caused a great deal of damage e. exceeding f. blocked g. evacuate h. heavy rains/snowfall
5. Listen for specific information (15 mins)	• Tell the learners that they are going to listen to three news reports from different parts of the world. Focus their attention on the three questions and ask them to make notes for each report. • Before you play the audio, explain that these reports come from different parts of the world, so they will hear a range of accents. Reassure them that they don't have to understand every word to successfully complete the task. **Audio script (3:06 minutes)** [Spoken by Indian / Bangladeshi speaker of English] Farmers in Eastern India are feeling the effects of another bad monsoon this month. Overall, June was 19 per cent down on average rainfall and July looks

as if it's going to continue affecting the east and central provinces of the country. Although not likely to reach the devastating conditions of 2032, a poor harvest is expected, and the Indian economy is likely to be affected.

In 2032, almost half of India, home to more than 500 million people, experienced drought-like conditions, and the accompanying heatwave killed many people in the eastern state of Bihar. Many more vulnerable families are being forced to leave their lands and take shelter in relief camps.

Since the 2020s, which were much drier than normal, there has been on average five per cent more rain on average in India than before 2020. The rain is falling at unusual times of year, causing damage to crops. But this year, it looks likely that we are returning to the other extreme: drought conditions.

[Spoken by Russian speaker of English]

Areas of eastern Siberia are experiencing unusually high temperatures, leading to wildfires across the region. While it isn't uncommon for these areas of tundra to burn in summer, scientists say there is reason to be worried. Marianna Vinogradov, professor in environmental geography at the Moscow School of Economics, said that the size of the fires has not been seen since 2027.

The fires are further north than usual, and the explanation, unsurprisingly, is human-caused global heating. The Arctic region is experiencing rising temperatures at more than twice the speed than the rest of the planet.

The good news is that these fires are a long way from towns or villages. What is not so good is that they will only make the situation worse in future years. It seems the fires are burning through 'peat', which is soil that keeps the carbon locked in the ground. When they burn, carbon stores emit greenhouse gases, which further exacerbate global warming, leading to more fires.

[Spoken by Arabic speaker of English]

The Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia is under several centimetres of snow this morning as the region south of Mecca experiences snow for the second time this winter. Families were out enjoying the cold snap. One group of children decided that a snowman was boring and built a snow camel instead.

It's not all fun, though. The local traffic police are warning drivers to be especially careful in the snowy conditions.

Although snow has always been a regular feature of the northern mountain regions, the first record of snow in this part of the country wasn't until 2021. Since then, despite hotter summers in recent years, Saudis have enjoyed regular snowfall in winter in many parts of the country. As with most other parts of the world, weather is becoming more extreme and less predictable because of human carbon emissions.

- Elicit the answers from the learners. Ask which news reports surprised them most. Check that learners understand that these are imaginary news reports from the future, but that they are all based on real events that have happened already. In 2021 there were unusual tundra fires in Siberia, snow in Saudi Arabia and a dry Indian monsoon.

- If possible, you may want to show learners the sources of these news events:

  - https://news.climate.columbia.edu/2021/04/14/climate-change-indian-monsoon/
  - https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/climate-change/drought-watch-more-than-44-of-india-now-suffers-65127
  - https://www.esquireme.com/content/50462-snow-falls-in-saudi-arabia-for-the-first-time-in-50-years
  - https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jul/15/climate-change-made-siberian-heatwave-600-times-more-likely-study

- You may decide to explore the listening experience with different accents. Ask the learners which accents they found easiest and hardest to understand, and which they liked listening to the most. Also ask them which of these accents they may hear again in the future when using English. Explain that because English is the main language for international communication, it is important to get experience listening to many different accents.

  Answers:

  First report: drought (monsoon failing) in India, sometime after 2032.

  Second report: tundra fires in Siberia in Russia, sometime after 2027.

  Third report: snowfall in Saudi Arabia, sometime after 2021.

  All the weather events are caused by effects of climate change (global heating).

6. Listening for more detail (10 mins)	- Point to Exercise 6. Tell the class that they are going to listen again, and that this time they must decide which event is the answer to each question a–f. - Go through the answers with the class, nominating different learners for each question. If they struggle to understand the detail, consider showing them the audio scripts to read along as they listen the second time. Answers: a. Russia (a long way from towns or villages) b. India (vulnerable families forced to leave lands …) c. India (the Indian economy is likely to be affected)

	d. Saudi Arabia (families were out enjoying the cold snap … children … built a snow camel)
	e. Saudi Arabia (snow … a regular feature of the northern mountain regions, the first … snow in this part of the country wasn't until 2021)
	f. Russia (exacerbate global warming, leading to more fires)
7. Discussion (10 mins)	• Point to the two questions in Exercise 7 and give the class 5 minutes to discuss them. Put learners in pairs.
	• As they discuss, go around the class listening to the discussion, responding and making suggestions. You may decide to conduct the discussion as a whole class instead if you think that some learners will find it hard to answer the questions.
	Possible answers:
	The Indian news is worrying because it affects so many people, many of them poor, so the number of deaths could be high; the Russian news is worrying because it is making global heating worse (this is known as a 'feedback loop', where the consequence of a rise in temperature causes fires which release more carbon, thus making global heating worse); the Saudi news is worrying if we accept that the snow is a sign that weather is getting more extreme in many parts of the world.
	This is a big question, but the short answer is that we need to burn less carbon (coal, gas and oil) in order to slow down global heating. There are many things we can do on a personal level (fly less, eat less meat, use public transport more, etc.), but more important is to put pressure on governments and corporations to stop funding fossil fuel extraction, invest in renewable energy such as wind and solar power, and encourage people to act responsibly for the future.
8. Group writing (15 mins)	• Explain the imaginary situation in Exercise 8 and what the learners have to do, starting with choosing a weather event. Encourage learners to choose an event that is realistic in their region.
	• Before you put them in groups, elicit one or two examples of action by the authorities in emergency situations (e.g. converting sports centres into refuge centres for people who have lost their homes) and advice they may give (e.g. stay indoors, move food and essential items to a safe place).
	• Also point them to the language in bold in Exercise 3 and elicit some expressions that might be useful, e.g. *Residents are being advised to* (*avoid travel …*).

	• Put the learners in groups of three or four and number each group. Hand each group some sticky notes and tell them to write separate tweets on the sticky notes. Make sure they write the number of their group at the top of each tweet.
	• While learners are working in groups, go around and check that they are on task and writing clear messages. Help them with language where necessary.
	• When they have finished, ask each group to post their tweets around the room.
9. Reading and evaluation (5 mins)	• Give the class a few minutes to go around the classroom reading the tweets from the different groups. Ask them to decide which group is best prepared for the event.
Homework	• Ask learners to find an article or video clip about a recent extreme weather event and read or watch it in order to report it to the class in the next lesson.

Contributed by

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