BRITISH COUNCIL

The Climate Connection

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Episode 1: Taking the temperature

Transcript

#TheClimateConnection
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Episode one: Taking the temperature

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

Duration: 0:45:00

Intro: I think it's Nelson Mandela who said education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. And language education itself seems to me to be even the most powerful of the powerful weapons within education.

Quote: One of the things coming out of the teaching community is we want to do this, we're, we're keen to do it but we don't really know how to.

Quote: No, they haven't told me about the climate change. Yes, I will like to learn about this topic. I will like to know how I can help.

Quote: Young people are mostly getting information about climate change outside of school. For the organisations, now's the time to get real.

Intro: The British Council presents: The Climate Connection

Intro: Climate action in language education. This is Episode One: Taking the Temperature.

Chris Sowton: Hello, and welcome to The Climate Connection: a British Council podcast focussing on climate action in language education. I'm your host, Chris Sowton. This is Episode One: Taking the Temperature, what the English language teaching community is and should be doing about the climate crises. Across this ten-part series I'll be talking to a wide range of people and organisations at the very cutting edge of language education and the climate crisis. Alongside these interviews, we'll be hearing directly from practitioners in the field telling their own stories in a section called: From the Field. Each episode will also contain shorter, more condensed vox pops from teachers and students as far afield as Cairo and Croatia, Delhi and Dubai, Porto and Palestine. We'll also be looking to climate related language in our Green Glossary section – but more of that later.

Chris Sowton: In our first interview this week we speak to Harry Kuchah Kuchah. Harry is a lecturer in language education at the University of Leeds in the UK, having previously worked as an English language teacher, teacher trainer, and policy maker in his home country of Cameroon. He is also the current president of IATEFL (the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language) and a member of the British Council's English Language Advisory Group.

So, to begin with, Harry, perhaps I could ask a very general question, what responsibility do you think the ELT sector as a whole has towards the climate crisis?

Harry Kuchah Kuchah: I think we have a very huge responsibility because English language education is kind of the melting pot for what every other subject area does. English language and language of a role is that tool that we use to communicate all the values that are dear to human beings and that are fundamental to our survival on the planet. The way we communicate, the way we engage with people can make or mar the planet because they can shift people's attitudes and beliefs and actions consequently. So,

for me, ELT has got a really fundamental role partnering with Science to support initiatives that help us sustain our environment.

Chris Sowton: And do you think the language classroom in particular is a special place where that kind of thing can happen?

Harry Kuchah Kuchah: I agree, it is in many ways. I think it's Nelson Mandela who said education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. And language education itself seems to me to be even the most powerful of the powerful weapons within education. As we know, language is, is a symbolic tool and the way we use it shapes the way we behave, the way we respond. And, the English language class seems to me an ideal place for bringing all these ideas together. So that's to them not just languaging but they're using language to talk about things that are really dear to them and that are dear to their environment. So, for me, yes, and there are lots of examples of work that language teachers are doing around the world, particularly in sub–Saharan Africa to bring that into the classroom.

Chris Sowton: So what kind of ways are IATEFL looking to do that and bring those ideas together? And what do you think teachers can learn from each other about linking language learning to the climate crisis?

Harry Kuchah Kuchah: Well, from IATEFLs perspective since 2019, we made sustainability one of the four strands of our development strategy. Now sustainability became an important part, and you know there would be no point in having a sustainability strategy if we do not actively do things to make a difference and I think IATEFL has done a lot of things over the last couple of years like actually reducing the amount of paperwork and forms and letters that we print and post to members. You probably know that for a while now, for some years now, we encourage our members to opt for digital publications, digital versions of our publications, and we are currently thinking about making Voices fully digital as well. We have been, since 2020, we have been using fully biodegradable polybags for our postage to members, for those members who still need their publications posted. I would like to encourage anyone listening to us to look at IATEFLs webpage because we have a list of things that we have put in place going forward to try and reduce our carbon footprint.

Chris Sowton: One of your personal areas of expertise is young learners. I wonder if you could share any ideas and tips for language teachers who are working with young learners, how they can help link the environment to language learning.

Harry Kuchah Kuchah: I think a starting point is to see language teaching as a political agenda itself. Political in, in the sense that language teaching is value led – we teach values, we teach human values and we might decide to teach the values if we don't want to do the writing or project those values that are important. So I think for children we need to start by thinking about what values we want to teach them because, for children, it's not just about using the language it's also why are we using the language? We are using the language to connect, to socialise, to, to create harmonious relationships with the people around us and I think that's a good starting point. The other one is also, and that for sustainability, erm, would be learning to learn. Helping children, not just teaching them, but teaching them how to learn so that they can become critical listeners, interact with people, listen and learn new ideas and use them in creative ways – those two are fundamental to me. So teaching the environment begins by building those values, identifying the values, training will learn us to be able to listen to those values and take action and very little things like their health, their body and how their body interacts with the rest of the world would be, or or their environment, would be a good starting points for developing content

that is engaging for children that appeals to their senses, and their curiosities and their, their authentic reality. So pointing out things about them, with children you know that children will tell you – oh, that's not good, that's not fair, you didn't say hello, that's not good, you have got to – so those little values that we bring to the classroom for children are quite important and saving our climate and our environment depends on how best we bring these realities into the classroom supporting children to be able to identify them, to be able to listen to stories or whatever that reflect the environment and make sense of those in a way that is authentic to their reality and taking their own action. I think most of the problems we have now is because there are, there are certain values that we learn at a very late stage in life when we have already accumulated habits that are counterproductive to those values, and developing those habits from childhood in a sense, for me, helps in this long term sustainable way of sustaining our environment if I might say.

Chris Sowton: I guess, one of the challenges of that is that there's still very strong perceptions in many parts of the world by education ministries, by school principals, by teachers, by parents that that's not the function of language teaching. Learning language means understanding the past simple, the second conditional, the lexical set of transport etc, etc, etc, and being then tested on those discrete pieces of knowledge. How do we as a community, as an ELT community, shift that paradigm, how do we change the perception of, of what language education should be?

Harry Kuchah Kuchah: I think we, we have a, a big responsibility to do that and that starts with having the right people doing the right thing. I know that language policies are often political policies, they're not always informed by linguists, they're often informed by political situations we might not know. But at the end of the day, the people who are called upon to implement those policies are often people connected with language and we have a unique chance to imbed all those linguistics, discrete linguistic items, into content that is relevant. The trouble is that if we, on our part, go ahead to just deal with er, er, discrete language content then we are giving, selling our birth rights to the wrong people. I think there, there should be some form of militancy in the way that we language professionals work. Militancy in the sense that we are using our understanding of language and how language actually works in society to develop students learning to bringing those discrete language items that are often measured into the language classroom so I think we need to look at that in terms of the curriculum and also in terms of the materials that we design for our students – the textbooks and all the resources that we use. How are they related to the student's authenticity? I think that there is a bond between every teacher and their students that is stronger than every other bond outside the classroom. And that partnership that we develop with our student is – in my own experience I have had to go against the, slightly against, school protocols, and to develop evidence of working with my students that something else really works. And it is that evidence that makes school authorities understand that, oh, there are alternative ways of doing it, afterall the evidence was in the results and in my students confidence to express themselves in the language – in a context where students were struggling with English as a foreign language, that's in the French medium part of the country. So, we need to –

Chris Sowton: So, so, I was going to say there, Harry, so you can almost say that you can see language learning classroom as a safe space where those sorts of ideas can be explored and discussed

Harry Kuchah Kuchah: Absolutely, yes, absolutely, I think the language classroom is that safe space outside the politics of policy where teachers and students can actually engage in a meaningful way so that students are learning discrete language items but at the same time actually learning about the world in which they live.

Chris Sowton: And I think for some teachers working in those sorts of challenging circumstances they can feel – I can't do anything because the government says this, the textbook that says this, my school principal says this and so on and so on. But even then, in their own classroom, there's still so much an individual teacher can, can do with their students…

Harry Kuchah Kuchah: Yes, yes, there is and, and there is a lot that individual teaching in challenging circumstances can do and Michael West himself said that in the sixties that the more challenges teachers have the more the opportunities for them to be creative.

Chris Sowton: Have you got any specific examples that you know of, Harry, either from your own experience or sort of other IATEFL members and what they're doing in, for example, sub–Saharan Africa

Harry Kuchah Kuchah: I know I have had a presentation which is online on Pedagogy of partnership is something that I have been talking about a lot and I show examples of work that my colleagues in Cameroon are doing with their students engaging with students to identify themes and topics that the students would be interested in because the idea of authenticity has often been built around materials but it's not often situated in the person. So a text is authentic because it's written without explicit – it's written not to teach English, it's written – so a newspaper article or a novel, those are authentic materials, but authentic to whose reality? So the work I've been doing with the research group and my colleagues in Cameroon has been to try and push the idea of authenticity beyond just the material but to the participants, the students, about what is authentic to the students, what are their authentic realities and how they want those to be brought into the classroom. And experiences from colleagues have shown that students want to talk about the environment about garbage disposal in their environment about cultural beliefs of bushfires and things like that that impact on the environment and when teachers bring this into the classroom, students are engaged, they are motivated, their sense of urgency is developed and they make themselves partners in the process not just around bringing the materials but also engaging in the practices the pedagogic practices that the teacher my want to, to adapt in the classroom.

Chris Sowton: On that point about learner autonomy as well it seems so important that teachers play a role in developing the agency all of their students because in many ways these young people at school now are going to be the ones who have to clear up the mess that previous generations of adults have created for them in terms of the environment so in that way we need to shift that pedagogy as well to develop those skills and aptitudes

Harry Kuchah Kuchah: Yep, yeah, and I'm really glad that teachers in Africa are doing that and my colleagues in the Cameroon English Language Teachers Association are more and more they are engaging with students, bringing students agencies to the fore, making students part of the content's development but also the pedagogy that the use in the classroom and that's something that's beginning to happen – especially in challenging context and that's something we need to be promoting and developing and and sharing.

Chris Sowton: Harry thank you so much for your time today.

Harry Kuchah Kuchah: Thank you very much.

Chris Sowton: Thanks to Harry for his time. You can find out more about IATEFL at www.iatefl.org and we'll be speaking to the Coordinator of the IATEFL's Global Issues Special Interest Group in a future episode.

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Vox pops: My name is Ouchama Aremou, I am a student in CEG2 Kandi in Benin. There is climate change everywhere in my village, in big cities and big countries everyone is suffering from the consequences of climate change.

My name is Réyanath Monzorogui, I am a student in CEG2 Kandi in Benin. I think that people from big cities are to be blamed for climate change because they pollute a lot.

My name is Zakary Salifou Fahizou, I am a student CEG2 Kandi in Benin. There are many causes of climate change. First of all, there is deforestation, secondly, there is pollution. To reduce climate change, we should stop destroying forests.

Chris Sowton: Tunisia is a small and beautiful country situated in North Africa between its two enormous neighbours Algeria and Libya. It has beaches, forests, deserts and mountains but it too faces many environmental challenges in particular coastal erosion and desertification. In this episode's From the Field we visit a school in Gabes on Tunisia's Eastern coast to discover what they are doing to address the climate crisis in their local area.

From the Field

Hi Everyone! I am a student from Tunisia, today I am with my friend and our teacher Mrs Abdelmalek and we are recycling thousands of plastic bottle caps. We have many ideas to share.

Collect, reuse, save our planet.

Hello, my name is Mrs Feten Abdelmalek, I am an ESL teacher from Tunisia. I am teaching in a primary school in Gabes, south of Tunisia. As a teacher I believe that we are all change makers and we have the power to change many things. The teachers must pave the way for the learners of the 21st century because they will face the challenges of tomorrow – they will be men and women of the future – they will be our hope to save the earth. Taking into consideration that only 11% of plastics in the world are recycled and I have pledged to remove plastics from our classroom.

I am an English teacher. As a teacher I'm aware of the climate change and plan to include this topic in our lesson plan and in our project works with learners. So, it's our responsibility to raise their awareness by the environmental issues. That's why, from the beginning we teach them how to solve big problems with mere habits, and to encourage their parents to be engaged to using eco–friendly substitutes such as paper and cloth bags instead of plastics. They have to be aware, and that's our duty to save nature and stop abusing Earth.

Chris Sowton: In our second interview this week, we turn to a new report commissioned by the British Council looking at how the ELT community as a whole is responding to the climate crisis.

Deepa Mirchandani is the founder and CEO of Deep and Meaningful Consulting an organisation focused on creating systemic and regenerative environmental social and economic change. Chris Graham is a freelance ELT consultant trainer, writer and speaker over the past four decades he has worked with education ministries, publishers, institutions and language schools of projects in over 30 countries. Together they are the co–authors of the Climate Action in Language Education Report, a new British Council publication which highlights global efforts to make the ELT sector greener promote and facilitate environmental responsibility and incentivise sustainability, they are here today to give us an early look into the main five themes. Welcome Deepa and Chris!

Chris Graham: Thank you very much, Chris

Deepa Mirchandani: Hello

Chris Sowton: So to start with can you give us some background as to how the report came about and how many people you've interviewed in your research.

Chris Graham: Well I suppose my kind of personal journey into this I was one of the people who founded the ELT Footprints, which is a grouping that exists online basically to help people in the ELT community share good practice around integrating climate topic into their classes and supporting teachers trying to do that and so it's been a very interesting project and to answer your question I think it's around about 30 people have been interviewed some of them formerly and other people have been less formal conversations a little bit of background to certain organisations and that's also been very interesting, as well as some more structured interviews.

Deepa Mirchandani: I think part of that is this is one component of the British Council's work on climate change and in the run up to COP 26. The onus being on wanting to inspire action through showcasing great practices and so that being in the format of the report is one of many different activities that the council has got underway and I think to be really able to demonstrate activity that's going on around the world. And so that's very much been a part of the research that we've done and the people that we've interviewed and also the reach of the surveys we conducted was really to be able to demonstrate that breadth of activity that's happening across the world.

Chris Sowton: And what are some of these great practices that you've come across, Deepa, can you share one or two with us?

Deepa Mirchandani: Actually, a lot of it is about individual action. It's about teachers being inspired and inspiring in the way that they are constructing their classes, in the way that they're engaging young people in really getting to grips with what this means for them in their local communities. From the use of music and song in documentaries and sort of mixed media and using that as a means of engaging conversations and inspiring curiosity to let's get our hands dirty and put our hands in the soil to build connection by connecting young people to each other to be able to have these conversations and recognising the power of language to be able to do that.

Chris Graham: Backing up what Deepa says, a lot of it is – maybe grass roots is the wrong term – but projects at classroom level or group of teachers level at just one individual who feels inspired to do something that that's very much the theme and I think as a result of that is, I suppose by definition quite fragmented, you've got something going on in Togo and you've got something else going on in Brazil and of course they don't communicate with each other, why would they? There hasn't really been a natural forum and that again is one of the drivers of this report. It's a way where we can say look what these guys in Togo are doing, look at this project in Brazil. But there are also some more complex institutionally–led projects going on as well with which I suppose in a sense, I don't like the word top–down, but effectively they are because they are driven, partly because they have required a certain amount of budget to do it, the stuff going on on the institutional scale as well and therefore internationally as well so that's been quite exciting. I had a conversation with a woman called Diana Torosyan at the American University of Armenia during her studies at University she spent some time at the centre for environmental studies within the university – she went on a voluntary course there, found out a lot and got very concerned so she has written a course book which is her dissertation basically for ten to 14 year old primary / middle school children and she's done it, the university have published it and it's now hopefully going for ministry approval so it's going to be an approved supplementary course.

She wrote, got it published, she piloted it with about 50 students and hopefully they're beginning to roll it out. Absolutely driven by her with the support of her supervisor and that is, that's lovely, that kind of stuff.

Deepa Mirchandani: We also interviewed those organisations working directly with young people, on engaging young people in climate change, also on the themes of things like eco–anxiety specifically tailored for young people on not just the science or the thematic areas but also dealing with the emotional pressure of what it means to be part of a climate crisis and how that burden – the weight of it – and how young people are able to acknowledge it, cope with it and not just in terms of what they know but also the areas they are interested in and where they're accessing the information

Chris Sowton: Did you find a similarity or differences in what young people were saying and what teachers, headteachers, institutions etc were saying?

Deepa Mirchandani: Young people are mostly getting information about climate change outside of school. And there's a lot of social media access, which means that they understand the nuance and the connectivity of climate change and racial justice. They're joining those dots because those are the nuanced conversations that are happening whereas it feels like conversations within the classroom, there is this tendency to erm…

Chris Graham: I think one of the problems with so many ELT coursebooks is that they have one unit – Unit 7 called The Environment, or Our Green Planet, or something like that. They do that unit, tick the box, we've done that and then forget about green issues for a year. And I think that's a, a rather disconnected way of approaching things.

Deepa Mirchandani: Yeah, so we need to move away from that approach and recognising that climate change is integrated and nuanced across all of the subjects it's not a Science topic, it's not a, it's not just a Geography topic, it's, it feels that young people are more equipped to recognise that understand it whereas with the best will in the world, teachers want to be teaching that but aren't necessarily have got the resource or the support in order to do that.

Chris Graham: I think one of the things coming out of the teacher's survey and also interviews around the teacher community is: we want to do this but we don't really know how to – how do we integrate it, we can't do it, and we probably don't have the time to do it anyway. That there is a mismatch, as far as I can see, which is what is available materials wise and what the youth voice is driving what they want.

Chris Sowton: And so do you think that a more integrated approach is needed not only across the curriculum but in terms of what language schools are doing but what other institutions are doing and that has to be reflected in their practices as well as their curriculum

Deepa Mirchandani: From an outsider perspective, what's really interesting to me is that there's been a bit of that mindset shift, how you don't need to be an expert actually its, you're responsible for inspiring curiosity and research skills and providing young people with the vocabulary to demonstrate that curiosity – you don't need to be a subject matter specialist.

Chris Sowton: Do you think that young people are increasingly linking climate justice to social justice to racial justice and so on, do you think that, potentially, some institutions are scared of letting that genie out of the box in that way?

Chris Graham: I don't know whether institutions are, I think probably publishers might be. I think institutions are going to vary according to political, cultural circumstances, where they

are in the world. There is a caution, I sense, publishers are not, are not engaging, it maybe because they feel it's a genie that needs to be kept in the box. In certain markets they might struggle to sell their books, crudely. There is certainly a mismatch between youth voice and what schools have either in their curriculum or in the coursebooks they use.

Chris Sowton: Now obviously your report is one way of highlighting some of these good practices from all around the world from Togo and Brazil and all these places that you've been talking to people. What are the networks or what are the mechanisms, do you think, could be put in place, or could evolve in order to highlight some of these issues and to make those sort of step changes that are necessary in the future?

Chris Graham: I think the networks are probably already there. I think the teacher's associations have a great role to play, and indeed they are. I mean a couple of the case studies will be around teacher associations – one in Moldova and the one in Togo, they are beginning to engage I think teacher associations as the language course associations around the world. I think the networks are already there. It's just engaging those networks.

Chris Sowton: Can you just say a little, er, Chris, just about the Togolese Teachers Association and what particularly they're doing that you found so impressive.

Chris Graham: I had a long chat with the guy who runs the association there at Duloc plastic bags, over here I know it's a real challenge throughout Africa. It's a real challenge in West Africa, not only to the extent of them being being thrown in the streets and discarded but also people sadly burn them to keep warm, with all the horrible consequences of that. So basically the project was around educating primary students to go home (I use the word educate) to educate Mum and Dad about plastic bag use and they've actually seen an impact apparently now taxis, have a container because traditionally people would go shopping, sort their shopping out in the taxi into the plastic bag out the window. Now there's a container in the taxi where the bags can be put, rather than being thrown out the window so he's actually seeing direct behaviour change as a result of English language education and the other thing I like he's brought people in from rural areas and the regions, trained them supported them, and they're cascading through their schools, it's not just in – because very often in these projects they're just in capital cities, he's actually gone out to rural areas to isolated areas and it's led to some degree of behaviour change and that's what it's about, I suppose, isn't it really

Chris Sowton: And placing young people at the centre of the process, I guess as well. Developing those links between the local community and the schools which are not always there. Perhaps I could just close by asking you both having done this research and written this report: do you feel more optimistic or pessimistic about the ELT sector and its efforts to become greener?

Chris Graham: I actually feel slightly more optimistic. I mean I've reflected on what Deepa says, I mean there was a lot of activity individually led, community led activity out there, but there are still gaps in the, in the chain around materials around resource around training. But I'm optimistic that those gaps are starting to close

Chris Sowton: So from what you say just there, Chris, you feel we're almost at a tipping point, do you think, where we we tipped over into more integrated meaningful sort of emphasis on the climate crisis within the ELT classroom?

Chris Graham: I think the green shoots are there. Yes, but it does require some of the big stakeholders significant stakeholders to say we're going to do this, the team voice to use voice out there and say, we want this very clearly, loud and clear we want this and hopefully also pressure from teachers are increasingly also pressure from parents as well as people

around the world are engaging more and more that we want our kids to, to get their brains around this, I think it will get better I'm, I'm not saying they are reshoots, but I think the circle will be completed

Chris Sowton: And for you Deepa, do you share Chris's emerging optimism?

Deepa Mirchandani: I think that for the organisations that make up this ecosystem, I think it's, now's the time to get real, because I don't think it has been great. I don't think the lack of environmental policies the or tangible action, the, oh, you know, we're going to look at this area because it's tied to our, our carbon footprint, but we're not going to actually join the dots and think about content. I think now's the time I think the tipping point is organisations realising that you either have to get on board with this or you're going to lose your market differentiator. And I think the bigger picture about the pressure on organisations, institutions to not just have awareness of climate change and its impacts, but to have demonstrable impact in it, and recognise their roles and responsibilities within it, is going to be a major differentiator. And I think the quicker, organisations are savvy to recognise that, the quicker, they'll be able to pivot and adapt and respond to, very discerning and very vocal, young people who are going to call you out, and those that don't respond, will be seen as, as laggards and people will go, we'll just go elsewhere. And I think that's exciting because it means action will have to happen.

Chris Sowton: Chris, Deepa, thank you very much for your time today.

Chris Graham: Thank you, Chris

Deepa Mirchandani: Thank you very much

Chris Sowton: Thanks to Chris and Deepa. And don't forget, Chris and Deepa's Climate Action in Language Education Report will be published in early June.

Chris Sowton: Oxford University Press, is the world's leading dictionary publisher. In addition to its dictionaries for children and language learners. It also produces dictionaries of current English through the Oxford Languages Department, who are responsible not only for the OED the Oxford English Dictionary, but dictionaries in many other languages including Arabic, Portuguese and Russian. The British Council is delighted the editors from the OED and Oxford languages will be sharing with us their words of wisdom about climate related vocabulary in every episode of The Green Glossary. I'm sure that while many of you listening will have a printed copy of the OED in your staff from office or home. Alternatively, a digital version on your laptop, phone or tablet, you may not know much about its origins. The first part of the OED or fascicle as they were known, was published in 1884 it was slow going at first taking five years to get from A to And subsequent vesicles were published over the next 44 years, with the first edition finally being completed in 1928. Now, nearly a hundred years later, the ODS third edition is online only updated with new and revised words on a quarterly basis. While many climate related words are already included in the OED its editors are actively monitoring many new terms in this field, and you're likely to see many more climate words on their update pages in the years to come. The OED is not just a very large dictionary, it is also a historical dictionary. It traces a word from his beginnings, which may potentially be more than a thousand years ago, through to the present. It shows the varied ways it has been used, using real example quotations from sources ranging from newspapers, journals and encyclopaedias to cookbooks, political leaflets and social media. In short, anywhere that the English language is used. The OED is thus a record of how language is now, and has historically been used, it does not try to influence how words should be used. Furthermore, unlike dictionaries of current English, where words are

removed when they are no longer in common use. Once a word enters the OED, it is never removed. We hope you enjoy The Green Glossary and as well as discovering more about words connected to the climate crisis, you'll also discover more about important aspects of the English language, such as synonyms, collocations loanwords, affixes and in this episode neologisms.

Sting: Brought to you by Oxford University Press

Kate Wild: Hello, I'm Kate Wild, and I'm an editor at the Oxford English Dictionary. I'm going to start with talking about climate emergency, which at Oxford Languages we chose as word of the year in 2019. When we were looking at the linguistic trends of 2019, it became clear that there had been a significant increase in usage of climate related words. Other words in our shortlist for word of the year were eco anxiety, ecocide, flight shame, and climate denial, and we'll be talking about some of those words in future podcasts. But Climate Emergency was a term that really stood out.

When we're picking a word of the year one of our resources is our monitor corpus of English, a multi-billion word collection of web based news material, which is updated every month. And the corpus data showed that the term climate emergency was more than a hundred times more frequent in 2019 than it had been the previous year, and it overtook health emergency, as the most common compounds of emergency. Now, climate emergency is not a new term. The words we choose as words of the year are not necessarily completely new words, or new to our dictionaries. In fact, the earliest evidence we've seen so far for climate emergency is from 1975. In an article from an American newspaper in which the reporter writes about how bulldozing trees might lead to a climate emergency.

But before 2019 It was not especially frequent, then in 2019, it became a very high profile term as various countries declared a state of climate emergency, and The Guardian and some other news outlets, made the decision to prefer the term climate emergency over climate change, we'll be discussing the differences between those two terms in another podcast. Last year I worked at the year selection was slightly different. We felt we couldn't pick a single word to encapsulate the concerns of 2020. So we instead published a report on overall linguistic trends of the year. And because Covid–19, and other issues were so dominant, words relating to climate change were on the whole, not as prominent in general discourse as they had been the previous year.

There were some climate related words that we did highlight though. For example, the word anthropause was coined in June 2020. The first part of this word is, anthropo, meaning relating to humans, the same element that's in anthropogenic and anthropocene. And the second part is pause, the anthropause refers to the global pausing or slowdown of travel and other human activity during the pandemic, and the wealth and consequences of this slowdown for the planet. We haven't added anthropause to the OED or any of our other dictionaries yet, we'd want to see whether it really takes hold and becomes widely used. This is how we approach adding any new word to our dictionaries. We gather information about new words from lots of different sources. Language corpora, books and periodicals, websites and social media. We also get suggestions sent in by users as well. And each time we update our dictionaries, we look at the new words candidates and decide which ones are more significant. We don't include every new word in the OED, or in any of our dictionaries, as this would be impossible without unlimited time and resources. And we tend to monitor words for a while before adding them to see if they stay around – many words come in and out of use all the time and have very short lifespans.

To give an example, one of the words that came to our attention a few years ago was clexit formed by analogy with Brexit and referring to potential withdrawal from international climate agreements. Clexit saw a flurry of usage in 2016, but it didn't take hold as a generic term, and it's become less frequent. So that's one that we haven't added, whereas we can compare that with some environment related words that we have added to the OED, like: rewilding, greenwashing, carbon footprints and food mile. These are all widely used with many thousands of examples in corporate and databases in lots of different contexts, and they're clearly established terms, they all date back to the 1990s or earlier.

There are various other climate related words on our watch list at the moment, one that I find particularly interesting is solastalgia. This word was coined by the Australian environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht in 2003. It blends the sol in both solace and desolation, with algia, meaning pain as a nostalgia, and it refers to the sense of distress caused by environmental change and degradation. So it's semantically similar to eco anxiety. It's taken some time for the word solastalgia to spread. Most of the early evidence we've seen is either by or referring to Albrecht or referring to the word as a coinage in uses like I came across this new word so the solastalgia, and we would want to see more natural use of the word in context before adding it to our dictionaries, but we're starting to see more of that sort of contextual evidence. For example, one recent newspaper article described the wave of solastalgia that washes over us, when we hear about particular climate events. The spread of the word might also be helped along by its use as the name of an album by the Australian singer, Missy Higgins in 2018. It's fascinating to watch words as they take roots and solastalgia is certainly one that we're monitoring.

When we talk about new words or neologisms we're often referring to completely new formations like solastalgia and anthropause, but many linguistic innovations are new senses of existing words, phrases or publications. That's the case with a term dirty weather. People have talked about dirty weather for hundreds of years, meaning, bad weather. For example, we have a quotation in the OED from 1660 that reads: when the snow is dissolved a great deal of dirty weather will follow. However, in 2012, Al Gore used the term dirty weather in a different sense in his dirty weather report, part of the Climate Reality Project, Gore said that dirty energy is changing our climates and causing dirty weather, referring to weather events like extreme storms, floods and heat waves being caused by fossil fuel emissions. It's been widely observed that the terms of climate change and global warming aren't sufficiently negative or urgent sensing and dirty weather is one of numerous alternative terms that are becoming available to better describe the situation, along with global heating, climate chaos, and indeed climate emergency.

Vox pop: My name is Patrice from Mali. I teach environmental content and deliver context storytelling and discretion to propose solutions to the local environmental issues.

Chris Sowton: That's all from The Climate Connection this week, let us know what you thought on social media using the hashtag, #TheClimateConnection. And if you enjoyed what you heard, don't forget to like and subscribe. Join us again in two weeks for Episode Two. Speaking youth to power, how young people are fighting the climate crisis.

You can also visit the podcast website at www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection.

Until next time.