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# Climate change: the impossible consensus?

## I. Word box

An oil spill	Une marée noire
A dumping ground	Une décharge
Shale gas	Le gaz de schiste
Wind energy	L'énergie éolienne
An activist	Un militant
To take a toll on	Laisser des traces
A green lobby	Un groupe de pression écologique
The rising sea level	La montée du niveau de la mer
To squander resources	Gaspiller les ressources
To wipe out	Anéantir
To pay lip service to	Faire semblant de s'intéresser à
An endangered species	Une espèce menacée
To wreak havoc	Faire des ravages
asbestos	L'amiante
disposable	Jetable
The ozone layer	La couche d'ozone
A shortage	Une pénurie
Greenwashing	Tenir un discours écologique de façade
The carbon footprint	L'empreinte carbone
overwrapping	Le suremballage
A drought	Une sécheresse

A flood	Une inondation
To generate rubbish	Produire des déchets
Arable land	La terre cultivée
Carcinogenic	Cancérogène
A poacher	Un braconnier
A staunch opponent	Un adversaire acharné
A hardcore environmentalist	Un écologiste inconditionnel
A tidal wave	Un raz de marée
A mudslide	Un glissement de terrain
The ocean beds	Les fonds marins

## Idioms about nature

Every cloud has a silver lining : il y a toujours des bons et des mauvais côtés

To walk on thin ice : être dans une situation périlleuse, marcher sur des œufs

There are plenty more fish in the sea : un de perdu, dix de retrouvés

To disappear into thin air : se volatiliser

It doesn't rain but it pours : un malheur n'arrive jamais seul

Pie in the sky : des illusions, des promesses en l'air

## II. Inside the topic

### 1. An apparent consensus

The “scientific consensus” in relation to climate change is mainly referring to the following points:

- The earth is getting warmer
- The warming is mostly due to human activity
- If greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions continue, the warming will accelerate

#### *But some discordant voices resist: the climate skeptics*

They may be defined as people who think climate change does not exist or people who **undermine** the impact of climate change

Examples:

1. In June 2017, Donald Trump withdrew the US from the Paris Agreement after his election (a campaign promise)

Trump's tweet already stated in 2012, "The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive."

## 2. The Tea Party: The far-right group in the Republican Party:

While 62 percent of Democrats say that global warming is caused mostly by human activities, most Tea Party members say it is either naturally caused (50%) or isn't happening at all (21%).

## 2. Political action against climate change

### *COP26 in Glasgow, Nov 2021*

People have had **mixed feelings** about this Conference

**Commitments:** – Deforestation (Poland; Eastern Europe)  
 – Carbon emissions  
 – Methane  
 – Green energies in companies

Antonio Guterres, the secretary general of the UN, warned that "we are digging our own graves" due to the failure to dramatically cut planet-heating emissions.

But some are concerned that not enough action is taking place at the summit, and many young activists feel that their concerns are not being taken seriously.

### *Joe Biden and climate change*

Joe Biden has warned that the climate crisis poses "the existential threat to human existence as we know it" and urged other world leaders to **embark upon** a transformational shift to clean energy, as questions **linger** over the US president's ability to deliver this vision at home.

Biden, addressing UN climate talks that have begun in Glasgow, said that the conference must act as a "kickoff of a decade of ambition and innovation to preserve our shared future".

But climate activists, many of whom gathered outside the Glasgow venue that hosted more than 120 world leaders on Monday, argue that Biden is failing **to live up to his own words**.

The president **touted** (= promoted) vast climate legislation that would be the "most significant investment to deal with the climate crisis that any advanced nation has made, ever," but the bill remains **stalled** in Congress, after being **jeopardized** by a senator who has extensive ties to fossil fuels (Joe Manchin).

### 3. Who can save the planet?

- Individuals? Young people/older generation?
- Politicians? The green party?
- Companies?

#### *The Giddens Paradox, after a theory by Anthony Giddens*

Since the dangers posed by global warming are not immediate or visible to most people, they ignore them; but waiting for them to become visible and immediate before taking serious action will be, by definition, too late.

#### *Whistle-blowers and activists*

**Al Gore:** 2 documentaries to raise awareness about the climate emergency:

An Inconvenient Truth, 2006

An Inconvenient sequel, 2017

**Young people:** During a rally during the COP26, famed activist Greta Thunberg called out world leaders for slow-walking progress.

**Greenwashing:** Greta Thunberg called it a “greenwash festival”

## III. Extract from the press and grammar focus

### Put a plug in it

#### *Governments should set targets to reduce methane emissions*

► *The Economist, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021*

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, methane-fuelled machines helped power industrialisation; today, the gas is a central but under-appreciated part of the fight against climate change. Human activity emits far less methane than carbon dioxide, but methane packs a heavier punch. Over the course of 20 years, a tonne of the gas will warm the atmosphere about 86 times more than a tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>. As a result methane, sometimes called carbon dioxide on steroids, is responsible for 23% of the rise in temperatures since pre-industrial times. Carbon dioxide gets most of the attention, but unless methane emissions are limited there is little hope of stabilising the climate. Unfortunately methane emissions have been anything but stable. After briefly stalling in the early 2000s, atmospheric concentrations of the gas

started rising again in 2007. A global inventory, concluded last year, found that humans were largely to blame. Chief among the reasons for the rise are the gassy output of livestock farming (cows belch it), rice cultivation (soggy environments harbour micro-organisms that make it) and the fossil-fuel industry (pipelines and rigs leak it). Agriculture and energy each account for roughly one-third of annual methane emissions. China, America, Russia and other big energy producers and consumers are heavy polluters. Countries with lots of livestock produce a disproportionate share of farming-related emissions, too. By how much do methane emissions need to fall? Carbon dioxide lingers in the atmosphere for centuries, making it hard to reduce its atmospheric concentrations. By contrast, methane has a half-life of roughly ten years, which means that it degrades quickly. If new emissions can be cut to below the rate at which old emissions deplete, the concentration of methane lingering in the atmosphere will soon fall, slowing global warming. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that, to keep temperatures between 1.5°C and 2°C above pre-industrial levels, human methane emissions must drop to 35% below where they stood in 2010 by mid-century. That is entirely plausible. A big step would be to stop millions of tonnes of methane from leaking out of fossil-fuel infrastructure each year, through pipes with holes, leaky valves and carelessness. Natural-gas operators will be able to sell more gas in exchange for a moderate investment in monitoring and repairing leaks. The International Energy Agency, a global forecaster, estimates that 40% of methane emissions from fossil fuels, equivalent to 9% of all human methane emissions, can be eliminated at no net cost for firms. The harder task is to reduce emissions from agriculture, but even here farmers can draw on new ideas, including developing new forms of feed for livestock, and altering how rice is irrigated. Politicians and the public tend to worry about carbon-dioxide emissions and neglect the effects of cutting methane. But dealing with the gas would have a large effect rapidly and at relatively low cost. Governments are busy firming up their commitments to cut emissions under the Paris agreement, as they prepare for the COP26 climate summit in November. On April 22<sup>nd</sup> President Joe Biden will convene his own summit. **America is expected to make its targets public around that time**, which will almost certainly include a pledge to reduce emissions to net zero by the mid-2000s. It should go further and include a specific target for methane. Then other nations should follow its lead.

### **Grammar focus: Passive structures**

► *“America is expected to make its target public around that time”*

On s’attend à ce que les pays signent un accord peu contraignant lors de la COP26 → Countries **are expected to** sign a moderately constraining deal during the COP26

La distinction entre une phrase à la voix passive et une phrase à la voix active réside dans un changement d'orientation. Le complément initial est mis en relief par sa position de sujet dans la phrase passive. VA : – He read the book. VP : – The book was read. VA : – He gave me a book. VP : – I was given a book.

Comme en français, le passif anglais se construit avec l'auxiliaire BE et le participe passé. Le complément d'agent, s'il est mentionné, est introduit par la préposition by.

Il est effacé si :

- il est évident ;
- le locuteur ne veut pas le citer ;
- il est inconnu.

À la forme progressive la structure est la suivante : Sujet + BE + BEING + Part. Passé My car is being repaired. On est en train de réparer ma voiture.

### ***Traduction de "ON" en anglais***

Il existe diverses manières de traduire en anglais le pronom indéfini français on.

#### **1. À LA VOIX ACTIVE**

1.a. ONE On l'emploie pour des vérités d'ordre général ou des expressions proverbiales. One should always think twice before speaking.

1.b. WE, YOU, THEY Selon le sens de la phrase. – We eat cheese at the end of each meal in France (le locuteur est français). – You can easily get drunk after a couple of large whiskeys. – They eat a lot of mutton in England (le locuteur n'est pas anglais).

1.c. SOMEBODY, SOMEONE Sujet particulier dont l'identité est inconnue. Someone is ringing the doorbell. On sonne à la porte. III.1.d. PEOPLE Sujet pluriel à sens collectif. People are not ready to spend less.

#### **2. À LA VOIX PASSIVE**

Il suffit d'effacer le complément d'agent.

- He was called names. On l'a traité de tous les noms.
- A bunch of keys was found in the hallway. On a trouvé un trousseau de clés dans la hall.
- The results will be posted on Friday night. On affichera les résultats vendredi soir.
- He was given a book. On lui a donné un livre.

### ***Practise: Translate the following sentences into English***

1. On leur a dit de ne pas s'inquiéter.
2. On a ri de lui pendant des heures.

3. On cherche cet enfant depuis des semaines.
4. On lui a donné trop de travail.
5. Est-ce qu'on lui a prêté cette voiture ou est-ce qu'il l'a achetée ?

### Correction

1. They were told not to worry.
2. He was laughed at for hours.
3. This child is being looked for for weeks.
4. He has been given too much work.
5. Has this car been lent to him or has he bought it?

## IV. Practise and methodology

### A. Translation

#### *Incendies en Australie : un coup de semonce politique*

L'Australie est en feu. Depuis quatre mois, des incendies de forêt ravagent le sud-est de l'île-continent, poussant des dizaines de milliers de gens à fuir les zones des brasiers. Au moins 20 personnes ont déjà été tuées, un millier d'habitations sont parties en fumée, la faune est dévastée, l'armée a été mobilisée pour aider aux évacuations.

Pour une bonne partie des Australiens, l'aggravation de ce phénomène s'explique par le dérèglement climatique, dont ils voient aussi les effets, en ce moment, dans l'archipel voisin d'Indonésie, frappé par des inondations catastrophiques. Leur exaspération est si grande que le désastre naturel est en passe de tourner au désastre politique pour le Premier ministre conservateur, Scott Morrison, dont la sensibilité écologique reste à prouver. Excédés par l'immobilisme du gouvernement, 60 % des Australiens, selon un sondage publié fin novembre par le *Guardian*, souhaitent des actes pour lutter contre le réchauffement climatique.

*Le Monde, 3 janvier 2020*

#### *Blazes in Australia: a political warning shot/wake-up call*

Australia is **ablaze**. Bushfires have been **causing havoc** to the South-East of the island continent for four months, causing tens of thousands of people to flee/run away from **the inferno**. At least 20 people are reported to have been killed, one thousand homes have been **burnt to the ground**, the fauna is devastated/**has been ripped through** and the army has been mobilized to bring additional backup to organize evacuations.



For many Australians, climate change is **to be held responsible for/to be accounted for** the worsening of this phenomenon as they are also (currently) witnessing some of its **aftermath** in the **neighboring** archipelago of Indonesia which is currently facing/battling with appalling/disastrous/**abysmal** floods. People are so **infuriated/exasperated** that the natural disaster /calamity/tragedy is about to turn into a political disaster/**washout/bust** (familier) for the Conservative Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, whose ecological **slant** remains unclear/uncertain. According to a survey published in the Guardian at the end of November, 60% of Australians are getting **incensed** by the government's **stasis/inaction** and **are all for**/strongly supporting/pushing for/**urging on** concrete action in order to fight against climate change.

### Méthode pour la traduction : (temps total : 1 heure)

- **Attention aux systèmes des temps** qui fonctionnent différemment en français et en anglais : exemple ici, présent en français et present perfect en anglais (« depuis 4 mois, les incendies de forêt ravagent... »).
- **Les structures passives en anglais** pour traduire les structures pronominales en français : s'explique par → can be explained by.
- **Attention aux calques** : ici, par exemple, il faut résister à la tentation de traduire « catastrophique » par « catastrophic » pour montrer à l'examinateur toute l'étendue de votre lexique.
- **Attention à la syntaxe** : l'anglais supporte beaucoup moins facilement que le français de perturber l'ordre canonique Sujet/Verbe/ Complément. Vous devrez donc réorganiser les phrases en anglais pour rétablir cet ordre. Ici, par exemple, « Excédés par l'immobilisme du gouvernement, 60 % des Australiens, selon un sondage publié fin novembre par le *Guardian* » a été réorganisé en anglais.

## B. Opinion piece

### *The Guardian view on a just transition: make the red wall green*

As Britain confronts the unemployment crisis that will blight so many lives this winter, the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, has promised to be “creative” in introducing new measures to support jobs. Mr Sunak still seems **stubbornly determined to end, next month, the furlough scheme** that remains a lifeline