

Editorial

At the end of May, citizens in Europe went to cast their votes for the European Parliament elections. The election results presented a considerable change to the composition of the parliament, with the environmentalist Green parties winning significantly more seats, resulting particularly from the votes of young people from northern European countries.

At least in part, this was caused by the ‘Fridays for Future’ movement that had been started by Greta Thunberg, who in August 2018 started protesting outside the Swedish parliament in Stockholm on Fridays with the simple message of ‘school strike for the climate’. Within weeks Greta was joined by millions of adolescents, and young as well as older adults; culminating, so far, in world-wide protests on March 15 and May 24, 2019. Much of the movement’s rapid growth was accelerated by the Internet, and the English language has played a vital part in uniting young people world-wide.

Besides the fact that the use of English as an international lingua franca, in this case, serves a highly positive purpose, the movement is also a treasure trove for English sociolinguists, as it reveals how adolescents and young adults integrate English into their multilingual language practices. English is the language that allows the movement to organise internationally. The movement runs an international website (www.fridaysforfuture.org), a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Fridaysforfuture.org/>) and a Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/hashtag/fridaysforfuture?lang=en>), all in English. At the same time, local groups in countries as diverse as Australia, Germany, Italy, Mauritius, Sweden, Uganda and Tuvalu organise protests, held every Friday. WhatsApp groups established to coordinate local activities typically make use of the local language(s). When people take to the streets on Fridays, English contributes to a globalized, multilingual language use, and placards are in English as well as in the local language(s). English is visible in those slogans that unite the local groups at a global level and put the global movement on stage: ‘Fridays for

Future’, ‘There is no planet B’, ‘Denial is not a policy’ or ‘Our house is on fire’. Other mottos are captivating testimonies of linguistic diversity and creativity. In Mauritius, for example, these are joined by placards in French and some even come in the local French-based creole and read e.g. ‘Morisien pren to destin en mai’ (Mauritians, take your destiny in your hands). At a Hong Kong strike, one placard read ‘There is no planet B’ in both Cantonese and English. In Ireland, English placards occur side by side with Irish and Irish–English mixed ones, such as ‘Tick tock taoiseach’ (Tick tock prime minister), and two in Delhi mixed Hindi and English towards ‘Ab ki baar climate change pe sarkaar’ (This time, a climate change government) and ‘No saans, no vote’ (No breath, no vote).

To come back full circle to the European parliament elections, the inactivity with which the protests was previously met by most politicians was at the centre of two videos that went viral in Germany immediately preceding the elections. In both videos young YouTubers made strong pleas to their followers regarding which parties to vote or not to vote for. Both were in German. Increasingly, young urban adults around the world are embracing English in their multilingual repertoires, but are allocating space to it just as it fits their purposes and causes, whilst clearly also maintaining space for the other languages they grow up with and use.

In this issue we are pleased to include a number of articles that investigate and document the ways that English is used internationally. Topics include loanwords from Yiddish and Chinese, English education and EMI programmes in East Asia and China, English within the linguistic landscape of Jordan, innovations in English used in Teen slang, and prescriptivism on the television programme *The Big Bang Theory*. We are also pleased to include Minnie Quarterly’s review of *Talking Black in America*, a film that was highlighted in *English Today* (volume 35 issue 1) in January of this year.

The editors

The editorial policy of *English Today* is to provide a focus or forum for all sorts of news and opinion from around the world. The points of view of individual writers are as a consequence their own, and do not reflect the opinion of the editorial board. In addition, wherever feasible, ET generally leaves unchanged the orthography (normally British or American) and the usage of individual contributors, although the editorial style of the journal itself is that of Cambridge University Press.