Greta Thunberg’s Speech Power in Un Climate Action Summit 2019: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract. Behind the fact that youth voices and movements have a powerful effect on public, studies on their concern for environmental problems seem to be lacking. This study aims to reveal the power content of Greta Thunberg’s speech to world leaders at the UN Climate Action Summit 2019. This is a critical discourse analysis design research with qualitative data based on CDA Socio-cognitive approach. The source of data was the speech of Greta Thunberg at UN Climate Action Summit 2019 with its words, phrases, and sentences illustrating the power content as the main data. The data were analyzed based on Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive aspects and three power indicators of individual imposition, vision confirmation/transformation and strategic situation. The finding of this study indicated that the power was represented through the language Greta used in her speech. The topics with power content found were climate change issue, children as future hope, press world leaders, and children movement.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis · Socio-cognitive · Power · Climate change

1 Introduction

Speech is one of the kinds of spoken discourse that is involved in our social life. It is the way to express one’s thoughts by words that were arranged and delivered in public [1]. Speech can influence other people’s thoughts. Speech from different speakers create some phenomenal speeches which influence people or group who listen to it. One of the most phenomenal speeches in history is the speech brought by Luther King after the Long March in Washington on 28th August 1963. His speech was about his dreams of the equality rights of African-American with the white people, this long aroused speech was in Lincoln Memorial, publicly in front of 200,000 people. The spirit of his speech brings the very first step of awakening the equality rights on African-American or black people [2]. Lately, in the last 2019 there was a phenomenal speech that was brought by a 17 year old girl. The speech influenced many people all around the world. It was brought by Greta Tintin Eleonora Ernman Thunberg, known as Greta Thunberg in the UN Climate Action Summit 2019. She is a Swedish environmental activist on climate
change. She did speeches in many events. Her speech was fully emotional and got a lot of attention all around the world. It was one of her speeches which spoke about climate change and pressed the political leaders to take action to prevent climate change. The figure of a child, who fights for climate change, has successfully inspired millions of people worldwide in 150 countries to do a global strike known as Global Week for Future which took place from 20-27 September 2019 [3]. That was the largest climate change movement in world history.

Power in speech is an inexhaustible topic of discussion, research on power is usually a part of CDA research. Several such studies were found [4] about the speech of the former American president Donald Trump, this study found that Trump’s way to deliver his ideology in gaining power led him to succeed to gain many supporters that made him elected as The US President from the Republic party. In this research, the researcher analysed the data using Van Dijk’s thematic theory. Priatmoko [5] who conducted a research towards the former Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono Speech. She used Huckin’s methods to analyse the data. The result showed that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) explored the relationship among language, power, and ideology. Through the language used, it was revealed the strength of power and the purpose of the speaker, where the power is strongly felt and the ideology is clearly seen as well as understandable. The third is a study conducted by Jalali [6], Islamic Azad University, Iran. His research was on political speech of four candidates of Rasht City Council Elections in 2013. He applied the Fairclough Approach. The finding was that the theme of power was gained through the manipulation of technical registers, imperative sentences to invite people to make an ideal city, statement of responsibility of people and themselves, modal verb, urges, stresses and statement of disagreement. It was also found that how different candidates tried to impose upon the context for their strategic purposes, which they produced various types of problem resolution integrating with the use of relational values that indicate unity of solidarity and authority. Other study conducted by Khosravinik [7] described the various CDA methods and approaches to analyse the data based on discourse object; new media communication. Li [8] applied Fairclough’s three dimensional CDA analytical models and concentrated on the complex and invisible power relationship between the participants by probing into the grammatical features and the interactional conventions in institutional talks. The findings were there were unequal power relationships between the participants in the talks.

Critical Discourse Analysis is a type of discourse analysis research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in social and political contexts [9]. CDA used to uncover the hidden meaning and message of a text which certainly has an intention for its receivers. However, language users make choices of certain lexical items, structures, and styles for shaping discourse to convince the audience at social and institutional level. CDA explores the micro-macro connections between the use of language and the social and political contexts in which it occurs [10]. This may include tracing underlying ideologies from the linguistic features of a text, unpacking particular biases and ideological presuppositions underlying the text, and relating the text to other texts and to people’s experiences and beliefs [11]. CDA is interdisciplinary and eclectic, because the problems in our society are too complex to be studied from a particular point of view, to understand
and explain the object under study, integration of various aspects is required [12]. The most widespread approach in CDA is the socio-cognitive approach [13] that underlies social practice of a discourse concern in the text, social cognition, and social context. It does not only analyze social and political contexts of texts and speeches, but also abuses the power of media that may be able to control public discourse and attitudes. The socio-cognitive approach explains the fundamental role of thought representation in meaning but also suggests that the structure of discourse itself is better explained in terms of various cognitive meanings, especially evidence, belief or awareness of those involved in the text [14].

Power is one of the basic forms of social cognition that at the same time define the identity of a group and hence the subjective feelings of social identity (belonging) of its members [14]. Power is everywhere, power is a term for a complex strategic situation in a particular society. Power in discourse is the study of power by examining the concrete and very limited social settings in which individuals seek to influence one another through communicative interactions [15]. Fairclough [16] further defines that power is a continuously reinforced attribute, it must be constantly reaffirmed due to constant changes in the underlying context. The form of power struggle that appears in any discourse in the form of text, conversation or other forms, does not always look natural and neutral, sometimes various and different, for example, male power over women, king power over his subordinates, legislative power over the executive, etc. [17].

Meanwhile, Bourdieu’s symbolic power is the power that is formed through speech, making people see and believe, confirm or intend to change the vision of the world [18]. Symbolic power as conceptualized by Bourdieu can shape and limit the actions of individuals through their effects by shaping their individual habits, which result in actual social practice [19].

Power can be the starting point of any important event. Is power involved in global climate change issues? Or is it the power of world leaders; the policy holder or control holder of the world economy that drives global weather changes? Or on the contrary, is power able to influence them to preserve the earth and its contents? Currently there is a tendency of a rapid climate change that is thought to be caused by human. The unbalancing weather of Earth may disturb the continuity of the planet’s ecosystems, the future life of humankind and the stability of the global economy. Human activities have increased the number of carbon dioxide emissions, then driving up temperatures. Extreme weather and melting polar ice are among the possible effects [20]. The world has been getting hotter, according to the scientist the earth’s average temperature is about 15 Celsius has been much higher. Besides, more unnatural greenhouse effects with gases released from industry and agriculture traps more energy and increases the temperature, this also known as global warming [21].

Climate change becomes such an interesting topic to discuss because it happens all around the world. There are many activists who stand for climate change, and Greta Thunberg was one of the activists who brought a child’s voice, speaking up for climate change. She believes that there is power behind the rapid and unnatural climate change recently, but is true that she also used her power as child or teenager to express her protest towards the world climate change? This study aims to reveal the power content in Greta Thunberg’s statement in her speech at the UN Climate Action Summit 2019 in
warning world leaders against unnatural weather changes that have occurred in this part of the world recently.

2 Method of the Research

This research design is a critical discourse analysis under the scope of socio-cognitive approach [13] with the data source of Greta Thunberg’s speech script and video that criticized the environmental destruction by countries with political and business reasons that were presented at the meeting of UN Climate Action Summit 2019. This research used qualitative data [22] such as words, phrases, clauses and utterances containing three power indicators, namely individual imposition, vision confirmation and transformation, and strategic situation found. The video and script were collected by downloading them from youtube channel and web about her speech. The data based on the three power indicators, they were individual imposition, vision confirmation/transformation and strategic situation that were developed into crucial issues that were revealed by Thunberg in her speech, namely the climate change issue, children as future hope, pressure on world leaders, and the children’s movement by utilizing the 13 sociocognitive aspects from Van Dijk [13] which consider the broad discourse linkages with the social cognitive conditions on environmental issues that were unrevealed in the Thunberg’s speech.

3 Finding and Analysis

In this part the findings are presented in the form of crucial issues revealed by Greta Thunberg’ speech based on individual imposition, vision confirmation/transformation and strategic situation power aspects existed in her speech.

3.1 Climate Change Issue

Climate change issue becomes the main mission for Greta to do what she has done. Later, she put a lot of energy to bring the environmental issue to the world by speaking up, delivering speeches in front of world leaders, bringing up the climate change topic to talk in many conference events, telling them what is happening and urge them to put a lot of attention towards the climate crisis. She inspired a worldwide movement, which has successfully inspired 6 million people from dozens of countries to participate the School Strike for the climate also popular as Fridays for Future (FFF) [23]. Her movement began when she protested towards the climate crisis in front of the Swedish Parliament building on 20 August 2018. She held a signage board in Swedish skolstrejk för klimatet or “School Strike for Climate” and began regularly missing lessons to go on strike on Fridays, urging students around the world to join her every Friday [24]. In her speech, Greta’s concerns about climate change issue are expressed:

‘People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!’ (01”33’)}
Through the speech Greta brought at the UN Climate Action Summit 2019, she has struggled to speak up about climate change issues, in the context of the act sequence [25]. Greta’s statements were connected one another with her speeches before, she has done 18 speeches before this speech [26]. All her speeches were about telling people and world leaders about the global disaster called climate change that currently happens. Under microstructural analysis [10], the clauses ‘people are suffering’ and ‘people are dying’ mentioning the word ‘people’ represent the whole human in this planet that are currently suffering and dying because of climate change. The utterances use the word ‘suffering’ and ‘dying’ to illustrate the worst effects of climate change by using negative dictions.

These statements were not only empty statements, the damages on this earth currently occur, Amazon rainforest has seen a huge jump in the number of fires in 2019 [27]. Since the Amazon forest is an important part to contribute to the capture up to 25% of global carbon dioxide, there is a clear link between the health of the Amazon and the health of this planet. The increasing number of fire forests in Brazil up to 72,843 detected along in 2019. There are many others extreme disaster caused by climate change all around the world [28]. In 2019 climate change has made 15 natural disasters even worse, each event cost over at least a billion-dollar which the worst was Cyclone Idai that just cost 2 billion dollars but ultimately cost 1.300 lives in Southern Africa. More than that, Africa is more vulnerable than any region to the world’s changing patterns of climate change [29]. Those facts are consistent as Greta has mentioned in her speech. If this kind of disaster still happens and keeps continuing, climate change would be still happening, and the condition will be much worse than before. The pronoun ‘we’ is the first plural used collectively as ‘we the people and living things’, ‘we’ is anaphoric reference refers to people and the life of all creatures in the entire ecosystems that are being threatened. The utterance of ‘a mass extinction’ refers to the extinction risk of the climate change effects. The risk of global warming which causes climate change may lead to the future sixth extinction even worse. Guardian reported that according to the research, scientists analysed ‘a biological annihilation’ of wildlife in recent decades means a sixth mass extinction in earth’s history is more severe than previously feared [30].

Along with Greta’s statement, those data as discursive socio-political act [13] shows clearly about the current condition of the climate change crisis. In delivering this speech, the speaker used the multilevel hyperbole to get the attention of the audience. Firstly, she used the word ‘suffering’ followed with ‘dying’, ‘collapsing’ and ended with ‘mass extinction’. The hyperbole statements shown as crucial things because they involve life and the sustainability of life on earth compared to the words ‘money’ and ‘economic growth’ as unimportant aspects which are always used as an excuse for environmental destruction. As a teenager, the speaker used the hyperbole to make her speech exaggerated and then her message could be seen as the current crisis which needs an urgency to do further action from the world leaders.

The next statements that illustrate how Greta meant to reveal the climate change issue, she gave the information based on the IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C:
“…. The popular idea of cutting our emissions in half in 10 years only gives us a 50% chance of staying below 1.5 degrees, and the risk of setting off irreversible chain reactions beyond human control. Fifty per cent may be acceptable to you, but those numbers do not include tipping points, most feedback loops, additional warming hidden by toxic air pollution or the aspects of equity and climate justice.” (02”59’)

The phrase ‘the popular idea’ refers to the IPCC Special Report [31] that described the data of planning to cut the emission below 1.5 degree Celsius in the next 10 years aims at the Earth temperature stay below 1.5 degree Celsius. The word ‘emission’ refers to the emission carbon or greenhouse gas emission (GHG), since the industrial revolution, the concentration of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), and nitrous oxide (N2O) have risen in the atmosphere (climate.nasa.gov). In ‘our emission’, the possessive adjective ‘our’ functions as an exophoric reference of world people. The phrases Greta mentioned means a serious of conditions concerning global warming, like ‘tipping points’ means as an irreversible change in the climate system [32], the risk associated with crossing multiple tipping points increases with rising temperature. The expression ‘feedback’ refers to positive feedback that increases initial warming or ‘negative feedback’ that reduces initial warming (climate.nasa.gov). While the phrase ‘toxic air pollution’ based on International Energy Agency World Energy Outlook Special Report [33] is air pollution caused by concentrations of solids, liquids or gases in the air that is harmful and contributes to global warming.

A term of ‘the aspects of equity and climate justice’ Greta mentioned relates to the aspects of equity and climate justice, the fairness response to the climate change crisis in each country. Reported by Guardian [34] 100 companies have been the sources of more than 70% of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions since 1988. The response to the crisis should be implemented fairly between the country which emits high or tiny carbon. This aspect of equity and climate justice has been mentioned by Greta in almost all her speeches. The local meaning [10] of the ‘aspects of equity and climate justice’ informed to handle the climate change crisis is not only by cutting the emission carbon, by applying the climate justice globally could contribute to handle the climate change crisis.

In these sentences, Greta has used her power to impose her will on other actors in social relations. Power as individual imposition was used to convince the listener about how critical the climate change issue is. Greta has done much, brought her power to become different by struggling towards the climate change crisis. Her individual imposition power how people that even small contributions could contribute hugely to face this crisis if it is done globally.

3.2 Children of Future Hope

The uncommon thing about being a child or a young person is that Greta chooses to act showing her concern about the climate change. She struggles under her own belief to save young future generation future, to fight and to shout out the children’s uncertain future if the climate change crisis continues and gets worse. Here are her expressions about what she fights for:
“My message is that we’ll be watching you. This is all wrong. I shouldn’t be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you!” (01”04’)

Greta started her speech beginning with her response to a question about the message she had for world leaders; ‘my message is that we will be watching you’. The formal structure [10] of the pronoun ‘we’ is the first-person plural and an exophoric reference refers to the people, climate activists, and children all around the world who fight for the future toward climate change, ‘we’ also refers to the union of ‘we the people’. And the pronoun ‘you’ is the anaphoric reference that refers to the ‘world leaders’, it is coherence with the question sentence that asked to Greta before her speech. Greta spoke up as a representative of children, young people and climate activists who urged the world leaders to act and save the future. The utterance of ‘will be watching’ has local meaning ‘to be waiting for the future response and regulation towards climate change issues’. Those statements show that the power of vision confirmation and transformation was used through the words Greta delivered. The speaker answered a question briefly using short words and straight to the topic, since her demand was to press them to act seriously on this crisis.

The statement ‘this is all wrong’ used to clarify that the speaking girl in the conference in front of world leaders is a mistake, as stated in ‘I shouldn’t be up here’ and ‘I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean’. The speaker uses an auxiliary verb ‘should’, this modal auxiliary verb used mainly to talk about an obligation as a student not engaging in the situation, giving a speech in front of world leaders about climate change. She sacrifices her education to get through unordinary trip to act out her struggle. In the context of setting and scene [25], the speaker delivered the speech in New York City, to attend in the Summit, to travel by eco-friendly vehicle by racing the sailboat Malizia II from Plymouth in the United Kingdom to New York for weeks across the Atlantic Ocean [35]. She decided to stop flying, since aviation contributes to the climate change. In the European Union, greenhouse gas emission from aviation increased by 87% between 1990 and 2006 [36]. The statement ‘yet you all come to us young people for hope’, the word ‘hope’ is defined as a goal-directed thinking in which the person has the perceived capacity to find routes to goals, and the motivation to use those routes [37]. The speaker uses the word ‘hope’ is a hope to become a future generation and replace the old generation with a better world. According to Snyder, Cheavens, & Sympson [37] higher hope is learned in a trusting, supportive atmosphere, since children belong to the future and they have to be hopeful to pursue their dreams. When the effect of climate change becomes worse, children face an uncertain future. To find routes to goal and the motivation to pursue a dream, it needs a supportive atmosphere and interpersonal relationship among children and adults. The supportive environment is considered as has not been created due to the world leaders’ negligence of the climate change and that they are deemed not to carry out their responsibilities to the climate change crisis, sacrificing the children’s future. Hopes belong to the children and young people, how they can be hopeful to face the future that may not exist. Fear, sadness and anger were reflected in her words ‘How dare you’. The pure and honest character of a child that doesn’t have any behalf interest has brought the power of vision confirmation and transformation and has successfully inspired people all around the world to put their awareness on this crisis.
Regarding what Greta considers to be the fate of future children, she makes the following statement:

“…. They also rely on my generation sucking hundreds of billions of tons of your CO2 out of the air with technologies that barely exist. “So a 50% risk is simply not acceptable to us — we who have to live with the consequences.”” (03’19’)

The pronoun ‘they’ refers to the half of cutting the emission carbon and the additional contributions of climate change that would ‘rely on’ the children as the next generation. In this context, this phrasal verb reminds about the risk of climate change which is not acceptable for the children to live in. The speaker used the word ‘sucking’ instead of ‘inhale’ means a way rougher with more energy than inhaling to give sarcasm to the listener how bad and unhealthy air, the ‘billions of tons of CO2 or carbon dioxide out of the air’ that would be inhaled by the next generation. This is meant to contempt the world leaders of their negligence towards the climate change crisis that could harm the future generation. The utterance ‘50% is simply not acceptable to us’ refers to the cutting the emission carbon in half, while the other half will become a time weapon for the next generation ‘who live with the consequences’ with no hope. Her demand on the world leader was serious.

3.3 The World Leaders’ Responsibility

The world leaders’ policies are considered to be the ones most responsible for the rapid and unusual changes in the weather, an issue that Greta echoes in her speeches and even in her movements. In her speech there are words, phrases and sentences that describe this views:

“….You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I’m one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!” (01”33’)

The accusations directed at world leaders, politicians and businessmen stand out with the words ‘you’ and ‘your’ as parties who have responsibility to treat the climate change crisis seriously. Compared to the lost dreams and childhoods of the world’s children, this accusation seems to be the smallest possible representation of disappointment. The statement ‘you have stolen my dreams’ and the word ‘my’ refers to young people as a hint of their right to have dreams and hopes. Greta gradually composed the words from light ones such as ‘people are suffering, people are dying’, ‘entire ecosystems are collapsing’ and the climax is ‘mass extinction’ as a serious pressure because the phrase ‘empty words’ represents the lies and negligence of the climate change crisis accused to the world leaders. This is proved by the leaving of 5 countries such as Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany and Turkey to do nothing to mitigate their carbon emission [38] including other major carbon emitters like the United States and China that have not signed a protocol allowing children to seek compensation under the 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child. Greta and 15 climate activists presented their complaint about
this at the United Nation Children’s Fund (UNICEF) headquarters [38]. The end of this topic is expressed by the clause ‘and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth’ which is considered as an ‘excuse’ to explore nature so that countries can earn money and experience increased economic growth. The use of the phrase ‘fairy tales’ describes a lie that was practiced by these people. So, when compared to sacrificing the future of the children, this reason becomes a weak and unacceptable reason. Anger over this condition was expressed again with the expression ‘how dare you!’

The pressure on the audience, which is actually the world leaders in this summit, was constantly put forward in the speech, because basically by considering the facts of uncommon climate change, it is assumed that these world leaders have not taken any action to save the environment. This pressure can be seen in the following statement:

“For more than 30 years, the science has been crystal clear. How dare you continue to look away and come here saying that you’re doing enough, when the politics and solutions needed are still nowhere in sight. You say you hear us and that you understand the urgency. But no matter how sad and angry I am, I do not want to believe that. Because if you really understood the situation and still kept on failing to act, then you would be evil. And that I refuse to believe.” (02” 21’)

The speaker opens this statement by mentioning the current situation of climate change with informing that scientists have analyzed climate change for more than 30 years. ’More than 30 years’ refers to the 32 years (1988-now) since the IPCC organization was founded. The IPCC is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, it is the organization under the United Nation that is dedicated to provide the world with objective, scientific information relevant to understanding of the scientific basis of the risk of human brought climate change (Principles Governing the IPCC Work, 2013). The speaker used the phrase ‘crystal clear’ to describe the scientific data reported periodically by IPCC is completely transparent and unclouded, unambiguous; easily understood [39]. The statement of ‘continue to look away and come here saying that you’re doing enough’ illustrates the parties’ ignorance towards the respecting matter. In June 1, 2017 Donald Trump withdrew from the Paris Agreement after the 2020 US presidential election in November 2020 (bbc.com, October, 24/2019). In the summit China did not increase its commitments under the Paris Agreement, India made no pledge to reduce its use of coal, and the U.S didn’t speak at the conference [40]. These facts emphasize Greta’ suspicion and sparked the statement ‘How dare you’ for the third times.

Greta’s idea gets a lot of attention worldwide and inspired 4 million people around the world to join global climate strikes on September 20, 2018; which was the largest climate demonstration in human history, the phenomena of vision confirmation and transformation power was shown by starting doing solo strikes several times on the climate change crisis. Greta not only using her words to get the power, she transforms her vision to the real act along with reducing her emission. For a teenager it is a lot to do. Her courage to speak the truth to power becomes the icon of generation. In December 2019 Greta was rewarded from TIME as Time’s Person of the year as the power of youth (time.com).
Once again, Greta questioned the seriousness and concrete actions of world leaders towards preventing and recovering the climate change. The following sentences illustrate Greta’s doubts about their commitment:

“How dare you pretend that this can be solved with just ‘business as usual’ and some technical solutions? With today’s emissions levels, that remaining CO2 budget will be entirely gone within less than 8 1/2 years. There will not be any solutions or plans presented in line with these figures here today, because these numbers are too uncomfortable. And you are still not mature enough to tell it like it is.” (04”19’)

Successive stern warnings using the ‘dare’ phrases which are stated together with environmental facts serve as a statement of disappointment with the attitudes and actions of world leaders who consider environmental problems as trivial, as ‘business as usual’. The word ‘not mature enough’ is an insult because of their inability to manage the environment properly, instead they use it for business. According to the IPCC Special Report 2018 with the emission level today, the CO2 budget will entirely go within less than 8 years and it keeps counting down. The carbon clock keeps ticking and shows how little time is left for political decision-makers to take action to make new regulation to cut the emissions carbon following the Paris Agreement.

The power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world was used by Greta. She transformed her power to convince people through the language she used. This power in the use of her statements has successfully made Trump who had attended the meeting for 10 minutes tweeted on his tweeter ‘She seems like a very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future. So nice to see!’ [41]. Greta has gotten attention along with Trump’s statement. Greta’s power urges the world social perception and cognition [9] to see the irresponsible way of managing climate change crisis.

3.4 Youth Movement

The future belongs to the youth, this is what Greta held when reminding world leaders about their obligation to protect the environment. The statement on behalf of the youth can be seen in the following chunk of her speech:

“…You are failing us. But the young people are starting to understand your betrayal. The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, I say: We will never forgive you. We will not let you get away with this. Right here, right now is where we draw the line. The world is waking up. And change is coming, whether you like it or not.” (05”00’)

The use of personal pronouns ‘us’ and ‘we’ emphasizes and represents who she is. This snippet of Greta’s speech decided that world leaders ‘fail’ and did ‘betrayal’ against her and other young people in the world. This anger as the peak of her emotions so she decided to ‘never forgive you’ and reminded that soon there would be a change. This is not just a statement but tends to be an invitation to the world’s youth to take action. These sentences illustrate that Greta believes she has the power to lead social cognition,
especially young people, to support her. The mention of the phrase ‘The eyes of all future generations are upon you’ is as if young people are indeed on her side, so that world leaders cannot underestimate it. Although it seems that Greta still hoped that those people changed their minds, she used the conditional clause ‘if you choose to fail us’ with the intention that there is still a possibility and hope that world leaders will make political policies to save future generations.

Greta’s first step of doing strikes was begin in May 2018, aged 15, that she won a climate change essay competition in a Sweden local newspaper and three months later in August 2018 she started a solo protest in front of Swedish Parliamentary building to demand the Swedish government met the carbon emission target agreed by world leaders in Paris Agreement 2015 (bbc.com, July, 08/2020). Beginning from that strike she has regularly missed school, doing school strikes every Friday. Her consistency to speak up and fight for climate change issues does not only do once in a certain time, although she is busy attending conferences, and spends weeks on the ‘eco-friendly vehicle’ for the long trip to attend the conference and participates the strikes (time.com, July, 10/2020), which the Friday for Future climate strikes held not only in Sweden but in other places all over the world. The way to do strike not only done on the streets, it is also done through online strikes in social media like in Instagram by posting picture regarding to the climate change issue and put the hashtag #Climatestrikesonline and #fridayforfuture (instagram.com @gretathunberg). Greta uses the power of strategic situation by her consistency to do strikes, not even one day skipped from the schedule. The Friday for Future climate strike is continuing, Greta and other protestors have been done the climate strikes on the 101st weeks (July 24/2020).

Her consistency of speak up and demanding world leaders to take action has brought the power of strategic situation, this power means a set of relationships in which actors strategically seek to govern, shape, or manage the behavior of others by reacting to what others have done or might do in the future. The utterance ‘the world is waking up’ represents the global strikes by 4 million people all around the world demanding urgent situation to tackle global heating, the global strikes which held in September, 22/2019 was timed to put pressure on the leaders gathering for the climate summit, which is being held ahead of the annual UN general assembly (theguardian.com, September, 23/1019).

Greta’s intention to speak only on climate change crisis without any behalf interest, without being used by parties or her will of being popular makes her power of individual imposition [42] used to speak up as a teenager who put a lot of attention on the climate crisis. Greta appears as an inspiration among people who are already aware of this crisis and who doesn’t. Greta doesn’t have any interest in being popular is proof of her consistency and concern on demanding world leaders to act, she was rewarded from many awards for her works. Reported by Guardian (October, 29/2019) Greta declined environmental price by post on her Instagram account, she wrote ‘the climate movement does not need any more awards’. Instead of giving her appreciation they should start to listen to the current best available science. Even recently (July, 20/2020) she got the first Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity, and the award money of 1 Million Euros will fully be given to charitable projects combatting the climate and ecological crisis and to support people facing the worst impacts, particularly in the Global South.
She urges children and people around the world to follow her step, doing strikes in their own country demanding their government to move and act on this crisis. Furthermore, this speech has effects that make one of the world leaders criticizing Greta for her statements in the speech, Trump wrote on his tweeter regarding Greta’s speech, his response indicated that Greta’s statements interfered. Yet, the awareness toward climate change crisis shows increasing with the number of people joining climate strikes called Friday for Future spearheaded by Greta. The global social cognition processes the information of climate change which is brought by a teenager who doesn’t have any interests which only focus on the climate change crisis.

4 Conclusion

Greta Thunberg is not an ordinary child or teenager, she has a sensitivity to environmental sustainability and the availability of adequate nature for generations to come. Her writings, speeches, and movements show her consistency as an environmental activist, her continuous activities show his seriousness in fighting for his ideals. This study examines the text of Greta Thunberg’s speech which was read in front of the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit participants. The issues raised by Greta in her speech were 1) Climate Change Issue 2) Children of Future Hope 3) Youth Movement 4) The world leaders’ responsibility based on individual imposition, vision confirmation/transformation and strategic situation power aspects.

The issue of climate change is at the top of the agenda for Greta, she devotes her energy to bringing environmental issues to the world by speaking, addressing world leaders, raising the topic of climate change, telling them what is happening and urging them to pay more attention to the climate crisis. She inspired movements around the world, and inspired 6 million people from dozens of countries to participate in the Fridays for Future School Strikes. She fights with her own beliefs and ways to save the future hope of the younger generation, for the uncertain future of children as the climate change crisis continues and gets worse. Greta in her speech accused world leaders, politicians and businessmen of standing out as those who have the responsibility to take the climate change crisis seriously. The way Greta delivered her speech using power was found from the three power indicators. Firstly, she used the individual imposition to convince her listener while she appears as a child who doesn’t have any behalf interest. Second, she used the power of vision confirmation and transformation through the words she delivered. She transforms her vision to the real act along with reducing her emission and doing striking on climate change demanding world leaders to act. Third, her consistency of doing strikes, speaking in many conferences, changing her way of daily living to reduce her emission, informing people about climate change makes her get the power of strategic situations to make her listeners and people inspired of what she has done.

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References

41. “twitter.com @realdonaldtrump.”
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