



Episode 7: Natural language Transcript

The Climate Connection

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

Duration: 50:08

Quote: The way we talk about things influences our behaviour. So language influences whether we damage or protect ecosystems and the environment.

Quote: As fast as we're losing species from our planet, we're also losing languages.

Quote: It's important for all of us who are working in education, to contribute to raising awareness.

Quote: I really feel the purpose of English language education is not to spread the unsustainable stories from the west across the world, but rather to listen.

Sting: The British Council presents the Climate Connection. Climate Action in language education. This is Episode Seven: Natural Language.

Chris Sowton: Hello and welcome to The Climate Connection, a British Council podcast focusing on climate action in language education. I'm your host, Chris Sowton. This is Episode Seven: Natural Language in which we explore the way language shapes our environment, and how the environment shapes our language.

Arran Stibbe is a Professor in Ecological Linguistics at the University of Gloucestershire in the UK. Much of his research and teaching looks at how language shapes how people see ourselves, and their relationship with other animals and the earth, as well as how language can influence the way people perceive environmental issues. Arran, welcome to the podcast.

Arran Stibbe: Thank you.

Chris Sowton: So, Arran, perhaps we could begin by defining what is meant by 'ecological linguistics'?

Arran Stibbe: Ecolinguistics; people sometimes wonder how Eco which is Ecology could possibly be connected to Linguistics. But actually, the way we talk about things influences our behaviour. So language influences whether we damage or protect ecosystems and the environment. So, with ecolinguistics I might look at advertising, and how that encourages us to buy more stuff, and all of that stuff has an impact on the environment, or I might look at nature poetry and how nature poetry encourages us to care about and protect the environment.

Chris Sowton: So the power of language is very evident there

Arran Stibbe: Yeah. Language shapes how we see the world, so much of the world that



we live in is a constructed world, if you think about all of the institutions that are around us: education, politics, economic systems. They're all constructed through words, so you can't see the economy, it's a, an abstract concept in our mind, and it's shaped a particular way. And I call that a story. We tell stories about the economy, but that's not the only way that it could possibly be shaped. So we can tell one set of stories about the economy, or we could have a completely different set of stories that we talk about the economy and the stories we choose will influence how we treat the environment, whether we're in a consumerist economy, which is set on economic growth and destroys the environment, or if we have an economy that is based around the well-being of people and animals, and the planet.

Chris Sowton: And that's one of the projects I think you've been heavily involved in is called The Stories We Live By. Could you say a little bit about that project and what it's trying to achieve?

Arran Stibbe: Yes, so this is a project which has resulted in a free online course that 2,500 people have taken so far. And the aim of the course The Stories We Live By is to question the stories that underpin our unsustainable and unequal society. So we're looking at the stories of consumerism, stories that nature is a machine, stories that the goal of society is economic growth. The goal of companies is just profit at any cost. We're looking at these negative stories, which our society is built on, and which are leading us on a path towards ecological destruction. So that's the first thing we do in The Stories We Live By: we're exposing and examining our society. And then the other side is to search for new Stories To Live By, stories that can contribute to a much more ecologically harmonious society, where we share and we find our well-being in ways that don't destroy the environment,

Chris Sowton: And how do you see that, Arran, represented in, for example, English language textbooks? What are some of the dominant stories that you see there?

Arran Stibbe: This is a kind of an unfortunate thing because a lot of textbooks are part of the project of linguistic imperialism, so there's a lot of work that arises in countries like the UK and the US, to try to create markets around the world for our products, by being very friendly to countries around the world and teaching them English. But of course we teach them English in a way which encourages consumerism and encourages them to think of the UK or Western culture as aspirational, something wonderful and desirable. So I've analysed textbooks that are used in TEFL, so Teaching English as a Foreign Language, and they do tend to have these consumerist themes within them. They do tend to promote Western culture as being fantastic. And they often denigrate the local cultures.

Chris Sowton: I think in one of your publications you identify these four assumptions that are often found within textbooks. So one is excess consumption of resources improves quality of life. Second, non-human life has no intrinsic worth. Third, humans are at the centre of the world. And fourth only local people are to blame for ecological destruction.

Arran Stibbe: Yeah, these are very common themes, and what's unfortunate about this is that often the local cultures had deep ecological knowledge embedded within them. And what I really feel the purpose of English language education is not to spread that unsustainable stories from the west across the world, but rather to listen. So we teach people around the world to speak English so that we can listen to their stories, the stories from their traditional cultures, and we can learn from them. So I used to teach English in Japan for eight years. And what I did was I asked the students to go home and talk to their grandparents about traditional Japanese culture, and draw out some useful ecological



concepts from Japanese culture, express them in English, so that they can spread these ideas around the world.

Chris Sowton: So you very much see the role of English in that situation being as a, as a lingua franca, as a way of people understanding people from around the world so it's used as a sort of a form of currency to share those stories.

Arran Stibbe: Yes, exactly because the current stories that Western civilization is based on are clearly not working because society is getting more and more unequal, and there's more and more ecological destruction. The stories that Western countries are based on are not working so we do need to look around the world to find new stories to live by, and teaching English as a foreign language has huge potential to gather and draw inspiration from countries around the world.

Chris Sowton: And have you seen a shift in textbooks in recent times?

Arran Stibbe: What I tend to find happens is the publishers want to be more responsible to the environment, but then they draw from Western environmentalism, to base the textbooks on and Western environmentalism tends to suffer from some of those same problems that you were talking about before, that is very human-centred, that it tends to be based around sustained and sustainable economic growth, rather than reimagining our industrial growth paradigm.

Chris Sowton: I think you make that distinction in one of your pieces of research that you said between shallow environmentalism and a deep ecology.

Arran Stibbe: Yes, that's right so the shallow environmentalism is this idea that we can continue with our lives, exactly as they are, and everyone can get richer, without actually any kind of deep change. So just with surface changes, so we're going to do more recycling, we're going to turn the lights off, we're going to swap from a petrol car to a hybrid car, that we can accomplish everything without any kind of meaningful change in our life. So this is what I call, shallow environmentalism and deep ecology has a particular meaning so this is where you consider the well-being, not only of humans, but also of other species, and the physical environment, but I see deep ecology is more than that. It's about also the deep changes to our lives, to our societies, to our political systems, to our culture so making deep changes have a fundamental shift to a different way of life

Chris Sowton: And from a language teacher perspective, what changes do you think they could make in terms of their own pedagogy within the classroom in order to say move towards a more deep ecological position rather than one of shallow environmentalism?

Arran Stibbe: Well, some people say that they should throw out these western textbooks that are spreading consumerism. But my view is slightly different to that, I think it's better to use these textbooks and encourage the students to be critical of them. And then after you've done that, then they will be much more critical of the underlying stories behind Western environmentalism and they'll be more critical about the linguistic imperialism, and where they're being positioned so being positioned as potential future consumers to buy products from the west. So I would encourage using these materials, but helping students to be critical of them. That's the first thing. The second thing is to encourage the students to develop their own ecological philosophy. So develop their own set of values for the kinds of things that they want to see in the world. So they probably want to see much more than



recycling and switching from one kind of product to another kind of product, they probably want to see deeper changes in people's well-being. They want to see improved communities, and I think in general people care about animals, and the earth. So they want to respect the intrinsic value of not just people but also animals and plants and forests and rivers. And then the third thing is that I want them then to investigate their own culture and find inspirational ways of using language that align with their value system. So finding ways of language which can encourage respect for animals. Encourage gratitude for the resources around us, encourage people not to waste things because everything has a precious life to it

Chris Sowton: And if we could go a bit more, sort of, granular, a bit more focused from in terms of some of the specific vocabulary, language, grammatical structures etc that you think could represent that. Could you say a little bit about that?

Arran Stibbe: Yes, certainly. So, so my own ecological philosophy includes, among many other things, respect and care for animals, plants and forests and rivers. So I'm looking for the kind of language which encourages people to notice and respect and care about the ordinary nature that surrounds them. So, I'm looking for ways of using language that represent animals vividly as actors doing things in the world for their own purposes, as beings with value, beings who have a mental life who think, and are doing things for their own interests. And as humans as coming along and disturbing them, as preventing them from living their lives according to their nature.

Chris Sowton: So when we link that back to some of the things you were talking about students being more critical of their textbooks and so on, that might be, for example, seeing how the passive voice might be used rather than the active voice, that things are done to animals, rather than them doing the things themselves.

Arran Stibbe: Yes, exactly. So one thing that is interesting is just how language can delete the agents who are doing the harm. So, I mean, if you just talk about pollution. Well, who is doing the pollution, they are completely erased from that. And then the passive voice. I was looking at representations of chickens, and there were lots of passive voices in that, in texts from the chicken industry. So they were saying things like chickens are debeaked, are hung upside down. And these are passive verbs, so who is debeaking them, who is hanging them upside down, and so the agent who is harming the chickens is erased

Chris Sowton: And it sounds like quite a, it also normalises the process as well, it doesn't necessarily make you think actually what that means

Arran Stibbe: Yes, exactly. So we're looking for vivid representations that can represent both the harm, and distress and pain that is being caused through factory farming, through chemical contamination, through bad agricultural and fishing techniques. We want to vividly show the harm that is being caused to the victims of this. And then after that you want to resist this type of language, this type of discourse by just pointing out what the stories are. That here's the type of language used, these are the stories which are emerging from it, and this is the ecological impact as this system of farming is justified. Now I've been doing a lot of this, and the poultry industry has actually reacted to it. So there's an industry journal called Poultry, and one of the articles in there, referred to my work, and it said that the discourse of the poultry industry has been representing chickens in ways that deny their intrinsic value, and that the industry needs to change not just the language that they use, but also the physical conditions that the animals exist within. So they were calling for



linguistic changes but most importantly practical changes for the animals.

Chris Sowton: That's amazing, and I think it really reveals that, I think sometimes we can think there's an us and them situation as sort of a good or bad side, and so on, but in some of your work as you're saying there, it may just be holding up the mirror to what is going on and then people reflecting themselves about those, those sorts of things.

Arran Stibbe: Yes, because I think all of us are using language in ways that are telling stories that we don't agree with. We're doing that because it's our job, because often, because we think we have to. We think there's no choice but to use this kind of language in this situation. Sometimes that's valid, that's true, but often we have a lot more wiggle room than we think we do. So we have some freedom to use language in inspirational ways that can encourage people to rethink how we see the world. And we need to use our freedom to do that.

Chris Sowton: Lovely. Arran Stibbe, thank you very much for your time today.

Arran Stibbe: Thank you.

Chris Sowton: Many thanks to Arran for sharing his insights. Find out more about his work in our show notes.

Vox pop: Hi, I'm Nancy Carter, senior lecturer at the University of Brighton on our pre-session courses, I deliver a module where once a week I get the students to explore the UN Sustainable Development Goals. I start by choosing a topic and a task for them. Over the weeks I gradually hand over responsibility to the students so they choose SDGs they find particularly interesting, they create the questions to be answered, they search for the answers, and they present to the rest of the class.

Chris Sowton: As part of their wider response to the climate crisis, the British Council commissioned 17 projects, which explore the issue through art, science and digital technology. The focus of today's From The Field is one of these projects, Living Language Land, which is creating a living word bank, drawn from minority and disappearing languages in relation to land and nature. Find out more about this project, and the other creative commissions in our show notes, and at living-language-land.org.

From the Field

Philippa Bayley: Hello, I'm Philippa Bayley and I'm one of the creative producers of a project called Living Language Land

Neville Gabie: And I'm Neville Gabie and I'm working with Philippa on the project Living Language Land

Philippa Bayley: Living Language Land is a journey through endangered and minority languages from around the world that reveal different ways of relating to land and nature. We're going to be sharing 26 words in the run up to the COP26 climate talks to give a global audience a fresh inspiration for tackling environmental crisis. What's the connection between language and a relationship to nature?

Neville Gabie: I think language has grown out of a very intimate relationship to place in all



sorts of different environments. So, one of our partners, the Khwe in Namibia who are very much a desert people have quite a different set of words and relations to our landscapes from someone who might be living in a tropical forest, and that intimate relationship to their particular environments, reveals itself really, in the words, and structures and concepts of the language they use.

Philippa Bayley: Yeah, and I guess we can say as fast as we're losing species from our planet, we're also losing languages. Many of the minority and endangered languages are spoken by very few people and are being displaced by majority languages, or words are being lost from those languages. And it feels like when that happens we also lose all of the insights and the understanding, the wisdom that have guided people through millennia to live in the particular situations and contexts in which they do

Neville Gabie: Yes, I think when we lose species. When we lose the biodiversity of plants, when we lose the biodiversity of language, we lose a complete way of knowing and understanding, which I think makes us all the poorer. And that's so connected with a shift in our thinking really when we have to deal with something as big as climate change.

Philippa Bayley: Our take is that English doesn't really have all the answers, you know, it's English is such a dominant language in sphere of climate change policy and politics and, but that also enriches our languages, it also limits what we can think about because our language doesn't have words or concepts or ideas for so many of the important things that are there in nature. Neville, can you give us a couple of examples of where your thinking has changed because of one of the conversations that we've had with people around the world?

Neville Gabie: Well I guess over the past couple of months, Philippa, you and I have had so many conversations with people from all over the place, including fairly locally in Scotland and Wales and Northumbria. There've been a couple of instances where really, some of those conversations have completely changed how I relate to the world just outside my window. I mean one of those were some of the conversations we had with Tiokasin, who was a Lakota speaker from Midwest America and I think Tiokasin was telling us that his language is constructed entirely of verbs. So, if you look out the window and you see a tree, you would say it's treeing, you know, or a lake is laking, or the grass is grassing, and I think that completely changed my thinking when I looked out the window actually no longer you're seeing something which is an object, which is standing in the landscape but you're seeing something which is active, which is doing, which is growing. And just that very subtle shift in language has completely changed my understanding with my environment and I think it's those sorts of things that I think, I hope, our project will gradually reveal. I mean there's another example, we were speaking to a Welsh speaker just a few days ago and I was talking about the landscape, and she said that their word for landscape in Welsh is tirwedd and the literal translation of tirwedd is ground picture. And I just thought, that's so different, I mean the landscape that isn't something out there or over there is literally the ground under your feet. It's a picture of the very earth that you're standing on and I think that kind of intimate relationship, it's only a tiny shift, but it does change the way we kind of look and respond to the environment around us and I think it's those kind of subtle shifts, which I think language can reveal.

Philippa Bayley: So in this project, Living Language Land we're going to be sharing words across social media every week in the run up to the COP26. And we'll be starting at the end of July, and finishing at the beginning of November when COP kicks off. And what do we



want people to do when they hear those words, Neville?

Neville Gabie: Well I think for me, each of those little words is a kind of gateway into, into another environment, culture, way of thinking, so I'm really hoping that as people might go to our website or use our social media and see one of these words before them, hear the sound of the word, that it might just take them on a journey into a different kind of context, a different place, and perhaps giving people a greater sense of empathy to, kind of, some of the issues that we're all facing around the world in different ways. For me it's very much, it's a tiny project, in terms of the languages of the world it's tiny, but I think if this can just give people that glimpse into another way of thinking, that would be fantastic. What's the most important part of the project for you, Philippa?

Philippa Bayley: So each of the words is like a doorway, and I think when that doorway opens and the person behind that word is able to tell the story of what that word means to them, what it means in their context, I hope that will be a really rich experience that will bring people into a different way of thinking. And I just feel excited by the challenge of each one of us no matter what our language background, opening our minds to different ways of thinking and seeing what fresh insight that brings us about how we want to relate to nature and to our environmental process.

Neville Gabie: I really hope people will get to follow our project, our website, our social media and interact with it. It would be lovely to get some feedback from people who might have a word they want to share, or a word which has been lost, which might reveal something interesting. So actually to be active participants of our project.

Philippa Bayley: Yeah, we'd love people to bring the project alive in their own context. So, if you're a teacher and you're working with students, maybe you find something in the words that really illuminates an idea that you've been wanting to share. Or that you ask, or challenge your students to think about the world slightly differently. If you're an artist or a writer, maybe the words again bring some fresh ideas, some fresh inspiration, as well as being a platform for those people who are minority and endangered language speakers themselves to share their language with a wider audience.

Chris Sowton: One of the main themes of The Climate Connection is that the climate crisis is a global issue, which requires global solutions. In this episode of The Green Glossary, we therefore look at how languages other than English, talk about climate change.

Sting The Green Glossary. The Green Glossary. Brought to you by Oxford University Press

The Green Glossary

Hello, my name is Tressy Arts and I work in Oxford Languages. Unlike the lexicographers who have been speaking on this show before, I do not work on the Oxford English Dictionary. I am part of the Global Languages team, and we focus on any languages that are not English. So I am going to talk about words related to climate change in other languages.

The first thing that struck me as I was researching this was that it was, in fact, really hard to find interesting things to say about this. As a Global Languages editor, and someone whose first language is not English – I am Dutch – I know a lot of people who speak an awful lot of languages, and I think I have written to them all, and every time I got the same reply – we



don't really have any interesting terms. All the words that are used when talking about climate change are direct equivalents of the English terms, like in Dutch *klimaatverandering* and in Arabic *taghayyur al-munaakh* – both literally mean 'climate change' or English loan words are used. And that in itself is very interesting. Because, for example, if we look at another large international issue, Covid-19, we see that there are many terms in most languages that have nothing to do with English. The fact that this is not the same for climate change words shows that the discourse in this area is dominated by scientists who tend to write in English and by journalists who report on the science and often create translated terms. The terms do not emerge from the speech communities themselves. And the subject has not made its way into everyday language, despite the fact that there is a large awareness of climate change overall. Indeed, climate-related words have frequently been the 'word of the year' in many languages which we cover, for example *atsui* (*atsoewie*) (hot) in Japan in 2010, *incêndios* (*insane juice*) (wildfires) in Portugal in 2017, and *Klimabrøl* (*kliemabrul*) (climate roar) in Norway in 2019. One particularly interesting word of the year is the German *Heißzeit* from 2018. It literally means 'hot time', and thus refers to global warming. However, it's also a kind of pun, analogous to *Eiszeit*, 'ice age', so it's kind of the opposite of that: 'heat age'. I think this clearly demonstrates how this crisis has an immense and lasting global impact. Like I said, most words used all around the globe originated as English words which were either imported into the local language as loan words, or were translated literally.

This happens in whatever way is most natural for that language, as Rosamund pointed out in Episode 5. In English, compound words are usually two separate words, one noun modifying another: *climate – change*, *greenhouse – gas*, *carbon – footprint*. The same happens in, for example, Hindi and Chinese. In other Germanic languages, we like sticking words together. German is well-known for this, but Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian etc. will make them into one compound word – for example *klimatförändringar* is Swedish for climate change, where *klimat* is climate and *förändringar* is change, but it's written as one word. In principle this can go on forever, like German *Treibhausgasmindernungswirkung*, which is five nouns all combined into one word, meaning 'the effect of lessening greenhouse gases'. For more casual concepts, some languages like to use portmanteaus – words which blend together parts of different words. Thus in Dutch we have *plandelen*, a combination of *plastic* and *wandelen*, go for a walk, meaning picking up plastic while you're walking. Swedish has *plogging*, a combination of the Swedish verb for 'pick up' and 'jogging'. In other languages, we see that this type of compound is usually formed by a genitive ('of') construct, like in Arabic *taghayyur al-munaakh*, or in Russian *izminIye KLImata*, both literally 'change of the climate', or by changing one noun into an adjective, like in French *changement climatique* – literally 'climatic change'.

Other languages need to break things up more, like Swahili, which has *kupanda kwa halijoto duniani*, or rising of the temperature of the earth. Furthermore, we can sometimes see different strategies within a single country – India, for example. In Hindi, generally speaking, English loan words are used, whereas in Bengali, translations are favoured. Translations are usually very literal, so something like carbon footprint is a carbon footprint or carbonic footprint or footprint of the carbon. Some languages even create new words to be more like English, for example, the word 'sustainable' in the ecological sense is translated into Romanian as *sustenabil*. Although this sounds like a very straightforward equivalent, with 'sustainable' having a Romance language root, this word did not exist in Romanian before the climate change discourse. The normal word used for something that can be sustained is *durabil*, which is related to the English 'durable'.



Unfortunately climate scepticism also has its equivalents across the globe, such as the Dutch klimaatdrammer 'climate moaner' or German Klimaprediger 'climate preacher'. An interesting word I found in Bengali is nyaka, which is famously said to be untranslatable. It means something like coy, whiny, mildly annoying, and is used to suggest that there are more pressing and important issues facing humanity. Again, I think this reflects the fact that climate change is not in the forefront of most people's minds.

An interesting exception to the English hegemony is the word flight shame, which the Oxford Dictionary of English defines as 'A reluctance to travel by air, or discomfort at doing so, because of the damaging emission of greenhouse gases and other pollutants by aircraft'. This is a literal translation of the Swedish flygskam, which became popular in Sweden a few years ago. The idea was originally started by singer Staffan Lindberg and championed by several celebrities, including Olympic athlete Bjorn Ferry and the opera singer Malena Ernman, Greta Thunberg's mother, who all said that they would stop flying. This also gave rise to the word tågskryt, or 'train brag', but that hasn't taken off in English yet. The country where I found the most direct influence of climate change on everyday language is not surprising, when you think of it: the Maldives. One of the flattest countries on Earth, its highest point is only three metres above sea level. They are under very acute threat from climate change – and are literally set to be wiped off the map. And their language reflects that. In Dhivehi, the national language of the Maldives, a special word for sea has come up that is only used in the context of climate change and rising sea levels, lonu gan'du. Lonu is 'salt' and gan'du means a large mass of something, and so by calling the sea lonu gan'du the language is reflecting the changing perception Maldivians have of the sea, from an omnipresent ally to an all-pervasive threat, this huge mass that is threatening to swallow them whole. Other terms include rahgirun, 'island erosion', the eating away of the small amount of land which the Maldives has by the sea, and rah garaguvun, 'island sinking'.

Another effect on the language is that there has been a significant increase in the use of the word finihoonumin, temperature, specifically of the weather. Since the temperature of the Maldives is fairly consistent, this word was seldom used, but as discussions about global warming have increased, so too has the usage of the word.

Chris Sowton: In our second interview this week, we talk to Ros Appleby. Ros Appleby was a senior lecturer and is now an industry fellow with the School of International Studies and Education at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia. She has taught and researched on topics including Adult Education, Teacher Identity, Critical Applied Linguistics and ELT Gender and International Development. Welcome to the podcast Ros.

Ros Appleby: Thank you. Nice to meet you, Chris

Chris Sowton: So Ros, perhaps we could begin with an article called Environmental Fragility and English Language Education. This essay was part of a 2017 collection published by the British Council entitled: English across the fracture lines. Could you share with us your main argument in this article, and what your research showed?

Ros Appleby: Yeah, well, that article, as you say, was published in 2017, and the sort of background that I was looking at was a particular surge in migration from various parts of the world, across various parts of the world, including into Australia at the time, from Syria and Iraq, and also thinking about the background of our increased numbers of Chinese students, international students in Australia. And I was reading a bit of the background



about the environmental factors that underpinned those migration flows. So, thinking about the sort of complex mix of environmental crises, environmental destruction, increased flows of migration. And then what that means for English language teachers who welcome and receive those students in countries like the UK or the USA and Australia. And my argument was that we need to keep that complex mix in mind, I mean beyond those questions of migration and the impact that that has on the migrants, refugees, and our own industry beyond that. I think we all realise that, given the size of the environmental crises that we face, it's important for all of us who are working in education, to try in any possible way to contribute to raising awareness and understanding, and action on addressing the sorts of environmental problems that we see around us every day.

Chris Sowton: Could you give us some examples from your article, Ros?

Ros Appleby: Well the central one at that stage was prompted by my own engagement with the natural environment. I'm an ocean swimmer, I live very near the beach in Manly in Sydney, Australia. So I've been an ocean swimmer there for almost ten years now, and we see a lot of sharks in the water. Now, these sharks are all harmless, unless you choose to interfere with them, and I was quite curious about why the response to sharks by most people is one of fear, and assuming that sharks are dangerous and they're going to attack you. So, and there was also an incident in the newspaper in 2015, reporting on a particularly infamous shark incident in South African waters, where a champion Australian surfer, had an encounter with a Great White shark, and I was looking at the way that that encounter, and sharks, more generally, are represented in the media, and of course, you know, we're working with language so I'm particularly interested in the way that language presents the sharks to us. So I started collecting some articles that I analysed with my students, these are students in higher education. And they were doing an English for Academic Purposes subject with me, that came from across all different faculties. We looked at the shift in the language that was used to represent sharks from, at one end, the news media who, you know, want to sell newspapers so they sensationalise: the big teeth and any blood in the water and the danger and promote fear around sharks

Chris Sowton: Quote Jaws and things like that.

Ros Appleby: Absolutely. I think the headline in one of the newspapers actually was *I beat Jaws*. That was supposed to be the words of this surfer. When I was analysing those with my students, we could look at the sorts of languages used to represent sharks. What that did in terms of the response from the reader or the audience, and at the same time, learning about sharks, and also learning about language and the importance of that shift, and for these students, learning about that shift between everyday language and a more academic style.

Chris Sowton: What was your students' response to this exercise?

Ros Appleby: The majority of them were Chinese international students, and they're interested in the Australian environment, because for most of them, it's something that's novel, they're interested in being at the beach, swimming, it was also a prompt for them to do their own small research project. So, one of the ones that I thought was, for me, most interesting was a Chinese student who had been fishing in, in Sydney in one of the Sydney waterways, and had been approached by a ranger who told her that fishing was prohibited in that area, because it was an important reserve. So she did her own research and wrote a very interesting essay or report about the way that her family, with a Chinese cultural



background, thought about and behaved in relation to fishing as a leisure pursuit and family activity, and she also researched what an important reserve was, why was it important, and it mounted quite sensible argument about the importance of protecting fish and wildlife, in general, in our waterways

Chris Sowton: I suppose as well that she had, she gained an additional sense of an understanding about the place where she was living, of belonging to that place as well as, did you see those additional benefits as well?

Ros Appleby: Yes, certainly. So, again, it's that bottom up approach and encouraging students to be curious about the world that's around us every day, and learning about what we might call a place-based education, learning about the world around them, that they would find value in engaging in more deliberately, shall we say

Chris Sowton: In a recent piece of writing you did, you used the phrase entangled pedagogy. I was intrigued by this phrase, could you expand on that a little bit and say what you mean with this, this phrase?

Ros Appleby: So this, this word entanglement comes up in environmental studies, it refers to the way that the environment is made up of various species and various phenomenon that overlap in complex ways, and this is something, as you say, it's not new, we learned about this in our own high school days, when we're thinking about ecosystems. So entanglement is probably just a more recent word to bring us back to that understanding that we're never alone in the world, and humans, of course are always entangled with the others that we share a planet with, and an entangled pedagogy tries to bring that idea of humans' place in the world, always being mixed up with other species and other phenomenon, and bring that into our educational practices,

Chris Sowton: And also in the same article you talk about the, quote 'the effects of nature deficit disorder on human well-being'. Again, could you say a little bit more about what you mean by that and how you conceive of a natural literacy or natural illiteracy?

Ros Appleby: So nature deficit disorder was a term that was coined to describe the negative effects on human well-being, when we are alienated from the natural environment. And there was a range of scientific studies, mainly related to children's alienation from the natural environment and a particular concern with children's increasing engagement with technologies. So screen time, phones, tablets, computers, so when I was growing up it was all about watching too much television, but that seems to have multiplied enormously now. So, you know we've all seen toddlers in prams, looking at their own tablet while the parent is looking at her own or his own tablet at the same time and this sort of focus away from the natural world became of concern to some scientists who looked at the effects on the well-being of children. There are some studies also on the positive impact of engagement with the natural environment for adults, particularly in terms of an epidemic of depression and anxiety, and the sort of positive effects when we get out into nature walk across a meadow, lie under a tree, watch the birds in the sky or watch the patterns of the clouds, so that's nature deficit disorder. And nature literacy and illiteracy came to attention in the press a couple of years ago when a number of prominent people, including the author Margaret Atwood objected to the disappearance, in one of the Oxford Dictionaries of many, many words that refer to items in the natural environment, particular names of berries, particular names of trees, and while those words, what they call lost words, disappeared from particularly children's dictionaries the words that, of course came in to replace those words



were words that were related to technology: email, for example. So, nature illiteracy is the loss of our vocabulary, and our ability to even name and give words to natural phenomenon, natural beings, that our vocabulary in that domain has become diminished over generations

Chris Sowton: And I guess if those children lose those words, then obviously that gets replicated and passed on to future generations and those lost words can become lost forever potentially or certainly downgraded considerably. Do you feel that, what role do you think, for example dictionaries, have in preserving those words? Should they be reflecting the usage or the importance of those words at any moment in the society, or do you think they have a wider role than that in protecting them for future generations?

Ros Appleby: Yeah look, that's a really difficult question and it's certainly one that came up in the articles that we're discussing the removal of these words from the dictionaries. And of course dictionaries are intended to reflect usage, not to prescribe usage. Look, it's just a very difficult issue because if we're reflecting the absence of those words in common parlance, then, yes, it's something that we can mourn. But the question remains, is it the role of dictionaries to preserve those words, or do we all need to take a part in keeping the aliveness in our language, and by aliveness, I mean our connection with the natural world? So here again, as educators, perhaps we have an even greater role than the dictionaries that our students use by promoting that sort of observation, that close observation and engagement and discussion of the environment around us.

Chris Sowton: And it seems to me as well if we sort of pick up some of the things you were talking about a bottom up approach, or, you know, looking at nature, going into nature, to learn nature based pedagogies, these words are going to be used anyway because young people are going to point to a particular thing they don't know and say what is that? And the teacher then is going to either have to give their answer or find out what that word is! So, again if we adopt that more bottom up approach because young people are naturally curious and want to know the names of things, then that is perhaps going to rewild the language I think you used the phrase there, is going to keep those, those sort of nature based words in, in circulation.

Ros Appleby: The words in circulation and the practices of observing and naming, being able to talk about what we see, yeah.

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

Ros Appleby: You're welcome

Chris Sowton: Many thanks to Ros. And remember, you can find out more about her interview, get bonus material, and download previous episodes at our website, www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection.

Vox pop: I am an ELT in Cabo Delgado province in Mozambique. All teachers are given the mission of suggesting to plant trees around the house and all students are challenged to take some pictures of the trees and share to their friends, if possible, post motivational info, through the pictures via WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and so on. Thank you very much.

Chris Sowton: That's all for this episode of The Climate Connection. Join us next time for



Episode Eight: Present Tense, where we focus on how anxiety about the climate is a serious and growing problem in particular, amongst young people. Until then, goodbye.

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