

# The Climate Connection

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# Episode 7: Natural language

#TheClimateConnection  
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## Episode overview

Episode 7 is all about how language shapes our environment and how the environment shapes our language. In exploring this topic, we talk to two renowned academics working in this field. Firstly, we talk to Arran Stibbe, who guides us through the world of ecolinguistics, looking at how language choices really do matter with regards to the environment and how they can be a powerful weapon in fighting the climate crisis. This theme is picked up in *From the Field*, where we hear from the innovative *Living-Language-Land* project, which is attempting to create a living lexicon – a word bank drawn from minority and disappearing languages in relation to land and nature.

This global approach is echoed in *The Green Glossary*, where climate vocabulary in languages other than English, such as flygskam (Swedish), Heißzeit (German) and lonu gan'du (Dhivevi) are discussed. In our second interview, we talk to Ros Appleby, who talks about climate refugees, rewilding pedagogy, and how she created an English language course based on her experience of swimming with sharks.



Arran Stibbe



Ros Appleby

## In this episode

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

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

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

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.



## From the field

As part of their wider response to the climate crisis, the British Council have commissioned 17 projects which explore the issue through art, science and digital technology. You can find out more about these projects [here](#).

In this episode's From the Field, we discover more about one of these commissions, Living-Language-Land, the aim of which is to create a living word bank drawn from minority and disappearing languages in relation to land and nature. Find out more at <http://living-language-land.org/>.

## Green glossary

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.

The word cloud below shows the climate and English language related words used in this episode. Find out more about some of these words at the Oxford English Dictionary website: [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com). The OED have kindly made these words open access, so you can look them up even if you are not subscribed.



[Arabic](#)  
[Bengali](#)  
[Carbon footprint](#)  
[Chinese](#)  
[Climate change](#)  
[Compound](#)  
[Dhivevi](#)  
[Dutch](#)  
[Erosion](#)  
[Flygskam](#)

[French](#)  
[Genitive](#)  
[German](#)  
[Global warming](#)  
[Greenhouse gas](#)  
[Hindi](#)  
[Lexicographer](#)  
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# Teaching ideas

Why not use extracts from the podcast in your classroom? Here are some ideas of how you can use the interviews with Arran Stibbe and Ros Appleby in episode 7.

## Interview 1: Arran Stibbe

### Before listening: Prediction task

1. Present the following words to your students. In pairs or groups, they should guess what the following words with the prefix 'eco' mean:

- Eco-catastrophe
- Eco-warrior
- Ecolinguistics
- Ecotourism
- Ecofeminism
- Eco-friendly
- Ecosystem
- Ecosphere

2. Take feedback and check students' understanding. Explain that ecolinguistics will be the focus of the listening activity.

### While listening: Reflection task

1. Listen for these quotations in Arran's interview. Do you agree with what he says? Say why / why not.

Quotation	My response
'Language shapes how we see the world.'	
'We tell stories about the economy.'	
'A lot of textbooks are part of the project of linguistic imperialism.'	
'Local cultures often have deep ecological knowledge embedded within them.'	
'Teaching English as a foreign language has huge potential to gather and draw inspiration from countries around the world.'	

2. Discuss your responses in pairs or small groups

### After listening: Extension task

Ask your students to explore the website which Arran mentions, <http://storiesweliveby.org.uk>. You could ask them to participate in the course. It could be a class project.



## Interview 2: Ros Appleyby

### Before listening: Thinking about the topic

1. Share with the students the following quotation from Ros' interview. As a class, discuss (a) what it means, and (b) what could be done about it.

*“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.”*

### While listening: Phrase analysis task

1. Share with students the following phrases, which Ros uses in the interview. Students should take notes about what they refer to.

Phrase	Why it is used
'I'm an ocean swimmer'	
'I beat Jaws'	
'One of the Sydney waterways'	
'Entangled pedagogy'	
'Nature deficit disorder'	
'Rewild the language'	

2. Students share their ideas in pairs or small groups

### After listening: Contextualising task

1. In her interview, Ros asks the following question about nature words. In small groups, or as a whole class, discuss it.

*“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?”*

## Glossary

The following words and phrases appear in episode 7. You may wish to look them up if you are unfamiliar with any of them.

- Abstract
- Advertising
- Biodiversity
- Denigrate
- Empathy
- Endangered
- Epidemic
- Expose
- Fundamental
- Granular
- Harmonious
- Insight
- Intrinsic
- Millennia
- Phenomenon
- Screen time
- Underlying



## Bonus material

Visit the podcast website, [www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection](http://www.britishcouncil.org/climate-connection) for bonus material.

You can find a link to the podcast and the transcript of this episode at <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/podcast>

## Social media

Please share your views about this episode, and the series as a whole, on social media using the hashtag **#TheClimateConnection**.

## Podcast feedback survey

Please tell us what you thought about this episode of the podcast and our podcast show notes by completing this short online survey.

Survey link: <http://bit.ly/PodcastFeedbackSurvey>



## Links



British Council TeachingEnglish  
[www.teachingenglish.org.uk](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk)

OxfordLanguages

Oxford Languages, the home of language data  
[languages.oup.com](http://languages.oup.com)



# Detailed notes

Use these notes to find out more about the contents of episode 7.

Phrase	Explanation and Further Information
<b>Interview 1: Arran Stibbe</b>	
Arran Stibbe	Find out more about Arran's background and research at <a href="https://www.glos.ac.uk/staff/profile/arran-stibbe/">https://www.glos.ac.uk/staff/profile/arran-stibbe/</a> .
Ecolinguistics	<a href="#">Click here</a> for a general summary of ecolinguistics at Wikipedia.
A consumerist economy	<a href="#">Click here</a> for an interesting BBC article about consumerism.
The stories we live by	You can find out more about this free online course at <a href="http://storiesweliveby.org.uk/">http://storiesweliveby.org.uk/</a>
Linguistic imperialism	Linguistic imperialism is the imposition of one language on speakers of other languages. The global expansion of English has often been cited as the primary example of linguistic imperialism. <a href="#">Click here</a> for an interesting newspaper article about this issue by Robert Phillipson.
Lingua franca	A language or dialect systematically used to make communication possible between groups of people who do not share a native language or dialect, particularly when it is a third language that is distinct from the speakers' native languages.
Industrial growth paradigm	The concept, in the Western world, that the best form of society is one which is based on economic, industrial and consumerist development.
Shallow environmentalism vs deep ecology	An interesting blog which shows the difference between shallow and deep environmentalism <a href="#">can be seen here</a> .
<b>Vox pop</b>	
UN Sustainable Development Goals	The UN's 17 development goals recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. Visit <a href="https://sdgs.un.org/goals">https://sdgs.un.org/goals</a> to find out more.
<b>From the Field</b>	
17 projects	You can find out more about these 17 projects which the British Council commissioned <a href="#">here</a> .



Living Language Land	The aim of this project is to create a living word bank drawn from minority and disappearing languages in relation to land and nature. Find out more at <a href="http://living-language-land.org/">http://living-language-land.org/</a> .
The Khwe in Namibia	<a href="#">Click here</a> to read an article about the Khwe in Namibia and their battle for survival.
Language loss	<a href="#">Click here</a> for an interesting and accessible article about language loss.
When we lose the biodiversity of plants, when we lose the biodiversity of language, we lose a complete way of knowing and understanding	This issue is also discussed by Suzanne Romaine in Episode 10 of The Climate Connection.
Lakota	At present, there are approximately 25 to 30,000 speakers of Lakota. Visit <a href="https://lakhota.org/">https://lakhota.org/</a> for more information and resources about the Lakota language.
<b>Green Glossary</b>	
Global Languages Team	The Oxford Global Languages programme is a major community-oriented initiative aiming to transform the experience of millions of people worldwide by making their language available in digital form. Find out more at <a href="https://languages.oup.com/oxford-global-languages">https://languages.oup.com/oxford-global-languages</a> .
Loan word	A word adopted from a foreign language with little or no modification. Commonly-used loanwords in English include <i>cafe</i> (from French), <i>bazaar</i> (Persian), <i>kindergarten</i> (German), <i>opera</i> (Italian), <i>lava</i> (Hawaiian English Creole), <i>patio</i> (Spanish), <i>tsunami</i> (Japanese), <i>chocolate</i> (Nahuatl), <i>yin</i> and <i>yang</i> (Chinese) and <i>moped</i> (Swedish).
Covid-19 words	<a href="#">Click here</a> for a special update by the Oxford English Dictionary about language related to Covid-19.
Incêndios (wildfires)	According to <a href="#">Wikipedia</a> , the successive wildfires in June and October 2017 resulted in 111 deaths, 300 hurt, entire communities suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and thousands of hectares of burned forest – over half of the burned area in the whole of Europe that year. The government declared three national days of mourning on the two separate occasions.
Heizeit	For more information on this term, <a href="#">click here</a> .
As Rosamund suggested in Episode 5	<a href="#">Click here</a> to access Episode 5 of The Climate Connection.
Germanic languages	<a href="#">Click here</a> to find out more about Germanic languages.





Portmanteau	A word blending the sounds and combining the meanings of two others, for example <i>motel</i> (motor + hotel) or <i>brunch</i> (breakfast + lunch).
Plogging	<a href="#">Click here</a> for an article about plogging in Runner's World magazine.
The genitive	<a href="#">Click here</a> to read the Wikipedia entry on the genitive.
Swahili	A Bantu language which is an official language in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and widely spoken in the African Great Lakes region.
Bengali	With more than 260 million speakers, predominantly in Bangladesh and India, Bengali is one of the world's most spoken languages.
Romanian	A Romance language, belonging to the Italic branch of the Indo-European language family, having much in common with languages such as Italian, Spanish, French and Portuguese.
Flygskam	<a href="#">Click here</a> to read a BBC article about this interesting word.
Dhivehi	An Indo-Aryan language spoken in the South Asian island country of the Maldives by around 350,000 people.
The Maldives	A country with a population of around 550,000 people. It is comprised of a group of islands and situated in the Indian Ocean. Climate Change presents an existential threat to the small coral islands that make up the Maldives. Over 80 per cent of the land area of Maldives is less than one metre above mean sea level; as such, a sea level rise of even a metre would cause the loss of the entire land area of Maldives. A UNDP report about the Maldives <a href="#">can be read here</a> .

## Interview 2: Ros Appleby

Ros Appleby	<a href="#">Click here</a> to see Ros' university profile.
English Across the Fracture Lines	You can watch a five-minute summary video and read the free publication on <a href="#">TeachingEnglish</a> .
English for Academic Purposes	A type of English language teaching which focuses specifically on the kind of English which students need in higher education.
Jaws	Jaws is a 1975 American thriller film directed by Steven Spielberg, based on the 1974 novel by Peter Benchley. In the film, a man-eating great white shark attacks beachgoers at a summer resort town.



Entangled pedagogy	Ros discusses this issue in the following article: <a href="#">Human-animal relationships in adult literacy education: Reading the Australian Magpie</a>
Nature deficit disorder	Nature deficit disorder is the idea that human beings, especially children, are spending less time outdoors, and the belief that this change results in a wide range of behavioural problems.
Margaret Attwood	A Canadian writer. Find out more about her work at <a href="http://margaretatwood.ca">http://margaretatwood.ca</a> .
The disappearance in one of the Oxford Dictionaries of many, many words that refer to items in the natural environment	<a href="#">Click here</a> to read an article in the Guardian newspaper about this issue.
Common parlance	Everyday speech, the kind of words which people commonly use.

