

Institution: University of Gloucestershire		
Unit of Assessment: 27 - English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: Ecolinguistics and its impact on people's life and work practices		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2018		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Professor C. Arran Stibbe	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Ecological Linguistics	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1/09/2005 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Arran Stibbe's ecolinguistics research examines how linguistic features combine to tell stories that encourage people either to protect or damage the environment. Through producing publicly available teaching materials (including an online course taken by more than 2000 participants) and holding talks and workshops he has had an impact on a wide range of people internationally including teachers, students, corporate and NGO communicators, and therapists. The impact is primarily in five areas: Skills: improved ability to analyse texts; Knowledge: greater understanding of language and ecology; Attitude: greater appreciation of nature; Behaviour: adopting a more sustainable lifestyle; Work: transformation of curricula and communication practices in education, corporations and NGOs. The research also played a pivotal role in producing materials which led to the protection of a large area of countryside.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Arran Stibbe is a Professor of Ecological Linguistics and has worked at the University of Gloucestershire since September 2005. In 2014 he developed a new approach to ecolinguistics which uses cognitive linguistics to analyse the 'stories we live by' which are cognitive structures in the minds of individuals across a culture which influence how they think, talk and act. By analysing texts, it is possible to reveal the stories that underpin an unequal and unsustainable industrial civilisation and search for new ways of using language that inspire people to protect the ecosystems that life depends on. The research provides linguistic evidence of how, for example, a) stories embedded in economic discourses disregard the dependence of the economy on wider ecosystems; b) discourses of sustainability often fail to break free from the prevailing model of unlimited economic growth; c) the construction of gender in the media encourages environmentally damaging consumerism; d) agricultural businesses represent nature in ways that promote ecologically damaging agricultural systems; e) discourses from traditional Japanese culture and Native American cultures provide linguistic features that are useful in communicating ecological issues. The research has combined pre-existing discourse analysis techniques with cognitive science and applied the resulting framework to the analysis of ecological issues. In addition to this, Prof Stibbe has developed new theoretical advances including: a) the use of an 'ecosophical framework' to supply criteria for evaluating environmental discourses, b) the extension of identity performance theory to include ecological identities, c) a rethinking of the concept of 'cultural hegemony' within an ecological context and d) the creation of a new theory and set of practical tools for investigating erasure and salience in texts.</p>		
3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)		

- Stibbe, Arran (2015) *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By*. Routledge, London. [and second edition, 2021]
- Stibbe, Arran (2020) Toward a grammar of ecocultural identity. In *Routledge Handbook of Ecocultural Identity*. London: Routledge, 416-430
- Stibbe, Arran (2017a) Positive Discourse Analysis: re-thinking human ecological relationships. In: *The Routledge Handbook of Ecolinguistics*. Routledge, London, 165-178
- Stibbe, Arran (2017b) Critical discourse analysis and ecology. In: *Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Analysis*. Routledge, London, 497-509.
- Stibbe, Arran (2014a) Ecolinguistics and Erasure: restoring the natural world to consciousness. In: *Contemporary critical discourse studies*. Bloomsbury Academic, London, p. 583–602
- Stibbe, Arran (2014b) An Ecolinguistic Approach to Critical Discourse Studies. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 11 (1). p. 117-128.

Quality indicators: Stibbe (2015), published by Routledge, received positive reviews in the following journals: *Critical Discourse Studies*, *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, *Green Letters*, *Discourse & Communication*, *Discourse & Society*, *Discourse Studies* and *Language in Society*. Stibbe (2014b) appeared in a peer reviewed journal, *Critical Discourse Studies*, with impact factor 1.45, SJR 0.7. Other publications appeared in edited volumes from leading academic publishers Routledge and Bloomsbury. The volume edited by Milstein and Castro-Sotomayor (2020) was winner of the National Communication Association Book Award for Outstanding Environmental Scholarship. All of Prof Stibbe’s outputs were assessed at the level of at least 3* by the University of Gloucestershire’s independent assessor.

4. Details of the impact

Online Course: In order to bring his research to a wider audience, Prof Stibbe created a free online course in Ecolinguistics, *The Stories We Live By*, which launched in June 2017. The course is run by 22 international volunteer tutors who provide free tuition to participants in 11 languages, and there have been more than 200,000 visitors to the website and 2200 registered participants so far. The course has high international reach, with participants from Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia, North and South America. It includes videos, exercises, PowerPoints, notes, and readings based on Prof Stibbe’s research. The materials are for participants to use directly or for teachers to incorporate in their classes. To evidence the impact, an independent consultant carried out extensive qualitative and quantitative research on 272 course participants (source 1, section 5). Respondents reported changes in:

<i>Skills</i>	Improved ability to analyse texts critically and use language effectively to address ecological issues. <i>Example comments: “It has allowed me to develop a more critical point of view of how things are phrased and framed in subtle ways, not just the obvious message that they are giving.”, “I’m more selective of the language that I use”</i>
<i>Knowledge</i>	Greater awareness of how texts shape self and society; greater understanding of the root causes of ecological issues. <i>Example comment: “It has had a significant effect on my view of the natural world and how language shapes our understanding of the world in general, and of the environmental and ecological issues in particular.”</i>

<i>Attitude</i>	Greater appreciation of local nature; increased concern for the environment. <i>Example comments: "I am more aware of my surrounding environment, and more conscious in my interaction with nature", "After taking the course, I am much more concerned about the ecosystem and my environment"</i>
<i>Behaviour</i>	Practical changes to live more sustainable lives. <i>Example comments: "I changed my lifestyle and am living a happier, more natural and positive life than before. These changes were purely due to the outlet that Ecolinguistics gave me", "It's positively life-changing"</i>
<i>Work</i>	Transformation of curricula to include sustainability issues in education; improved environmental communication practice in corporations and NGOs; inclusion of ecological factors in therapy. <i>Example comments: "In a nutshell, ecolinguistics makes me and my students more aware of how communication represents our world and the way we live.", "I have worked with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and helped to change their message", "It feeds into my therapeutic work where I facilitate dialogue between different environmental groups", "I have changed the editorial direction of the small press I run"</i>

In total, 29.50% of the 272 respondents described the impact of Prof Stibbe's research on their work or life as *very significant*, and 82.02% described it as *significant* or *very significant*.

Weatherworld Project: As part of an Erasmus+ project, Prof Stibbe created extensive materials for schoolteachers and pupils on the topic of *Living in the Weatherworld*. These combined linguistics, literature, anthropology, ecology, and photography in accessible ways to contribute to Education for Sustainability across the curriculum. The materials were published online and in hardback and paperback books, translated into four languages and distributed to teachers in workshops in four countries. A testimonial from Maribor University shows that the materials were used with 2500 teachers, heritage interpreters, education students, school children and members of the public (source 3, section 5). The testimonial describes significant impact in five areas:

<i>Attitude</i>	Participants reported feeling more connected with nature
<i>Professional practice</i>	Heritage interpreters and tourist guides reported the inclusion of ecological issues in their work
<i>Teaching</i>	Education students reported increased commitment to include sustainability in their future teaching, and teachers reported changes to field trips.
<i>Behaviour</i>	Participants reported changes to their own lifestyle in living more sustainable lives
<i>Practical action</i>	Participants report increasing their practical action to build a more sustainable world

The weatherworld materials are also used in Italy, and a testimonial from the CREDA institute shows that they are used with 30 teachers and 120 students a year, with similar impacts (source 4, section 5). The materials are also used in Turkey with trainee science teachers and a testimonial from Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University also confirms similar impact (source 5, section 5).

Greenpeace Consultancy: Prof Stibbe worked with Greenpeace to produce two detailed reports offering advice on environmental communication strategies. These helped shape the *Less is More* campaign, a widely publicised global campaign with extensive materials in 14 languages. According to Greenpeace, Prof Stibbe’s research provided a “goldmine” and “the ecolinguistic analysis had a significant impact in terms of shaping and improving the campaign”. One example given is how, following the findings of the consultancy reports, the campaign “decided not to focus our messaging on eating “better meat” but rather to emphasise the eating “less meat” part, to avoid indirectly reinforcing meat industry frames around the benefits of “good meat”” (source 6, section 5).

Crossfields Professional Development: Prof Stibbe worked closely with Crossfield Institute (an educational organisation in Stroud), including organising a joint conference, multiple visits, and leading a half-day training workshop for their staff. The CEO called this cooperation ‘immensely successful’ and described how it had led to transformed communication practices in their institution (source 7, section 5).

Eunomia Professional Development: Prof Stibbe’s research had an impact on the practices of the environmental consultancy *Eunomia*. Staff at the consultancy used Prof Stibbe’s materials for professional development, and he provided a training workshop. Follow-up interviews with staff revealed that the professional development had an impact on attitudes and professional communication practices. In particular, it resulted in better alignment of messages with values. *Example comments from staff interviews:* “I am more conscious about the linguistic choices I am making”, “...much more aware of the implications of the language we use”, “I’m even more critical in my analysis”, “we definitely have more control over the framing and the scope of our projects” (source 1, section 5).

Local Green Space Designation: Prof Stibbe played a pivotal role in the granting of legal protection to a large area of countryside that was due to be absorbed into a 5000-unit housing estate. He applied ecolinguistic techniques to produce oral testimony and more than 100 pages of written evidence for the government inspection process. A Cheltenham Borough Councillor has written a testimonial which states “Prof Stibbe’s work was instrumental in achieving Local Green Space designation for an extensive area of countryside on the outskirts of Cheltenham” and “The result of this work was quite staggering...without the writing and linguistic strategies of Prof Stibbe, it is likely that the area would have succumbed to all of the 5000 homes that were proposed” (source 8, section 5).

Environmental Communication Advice at Pale Blue: The founder of Pale Blue, an environmental communication agency, read Arran Stibbe’s books *Ecolinguistics* and *Animals Erased* (see underpinning research), took the online course *Stories We Live By*, and contacted Prof Stibbe directly for advice. In a testimonial he describes how this engagement with Prof Stibbe’s research provided him with effective tools that led to significant improvements in his professional practice. One example he gives is how ecolinguistic analysis helped change the strategic direction of a major initiative away from ‘Climate Repair’ to ‘Planetary Health’, a framing which better captures the interconnected nature of sustainability issues. He comments: “Overall, Arran Stibbe’s research has had a significant impact on my work in environmental communication and helped transform the communication practices of my clients” (source 9, section 5).

Curriculum at the University of Cagliari, Italy: While source 1 (section 5) provides evidence of the widespread impact of Prof Stibbe’s research on curricula across the world, a testimonial from the University of Cagliari (source 10, section 5) provides a detailed case study of significant impact at one particular institution. The testimonial describes how the university has “successfully used the *The Stories We Live By* course and other materials developed by Professor Arran Stibbe” on various undergraduate and postgraduate courses and gathered extensive feedback to discover the impact on students. Analysis of the feedback of 60 students revealed the following, in the words of an associate professor at Cagliari:

“Judging from the feedback forms, *The Stories We Live By* course had a highly significant impact on all my students, beyond all expectation. From an academic perspective, my students have refined their skills in linguistic and stylistic analysis, and have become more aware, and consequently more critical, of the texts, discourses and ideologies surrounding them. From a personal, but also social, perspective, they have learnt how to understand, connect and interact with nature and to draw inspiration from the nonhuman world; most of them have become interested in ecological issues for the first time and have felt encouraged and motivated to take environmental action; many of them have changed their daily behaviours and attitudes. In short, the impacts of *The Stories We Live By* course have been many and varied, and have positively changed the way my students look at the physical and social world and how they live in it.” (source 10, section 5)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

The following testimonials and reports have been included in the REF submission:

1. *Changing lives and professional practice: A report on the impact of ecolinguistics.* A detailed report by an independent consultant at M. R. Language Services. The report evidences the significant impact of Prof Stibbe’s research through analysis of feedback forms, questionnaires, and interviews with the participants of the *Stories We Live By* on-line course. It also includes findings from interviews with Eunomia staff.
2. Selected feedback comments from participants of the *Stories We Live By* course, also available here: <http://storiesweliveby.org.uk/comments>
3. A testimonial from a professor at Maribor University, Slovenia describing how the *Living in the Weatherworld* materials were used with 2500 educators, heritage interpreters and students so far, and the significant impact that this had on them, as revealed by feedback forms.
4. A testimonial from the Information and Education Program Manager, CREDA Institute, Italy, where the *Living in the Weatherworld* materials are used with 30 teachers and 120 students a year. The testimonial describes the personal and social impact on students and the professional impact on teachers who change their pedagogy and curriculum practices.
5. A testimonial from a lecturer at Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University, Turkey, describing how the *Living in the Weatherworld* materials are having a positive impact on trainee teachers.
6. A testimonial from a strategist at Greenpeace International, describing the major impact of Prof Stibbe’s research in shaping the *Less is More* global campaign.
7. A testimonial from the CEO of The Crossfields Institute, describing how Prof Stibbe’s work influenced the communication practices in her educational organisation
8. A written testimonial from a Cheltenham Borough Councillor confirming that the linguistic and visual techniques used in Prof Stibbe’s work led directly to legal protection of a large area of countryside
9. A testimonial from the CEO of Pale Blue, an environmental communication agency, describing how Prof Stibbe’s work provided effective tools that enhanced his professional practice and benefited clients.
10. A testimonial from an associate professor at the University of Cagliari, Italy, who has made extensive use of the *Stories We Live By* course and other materials produced by Prof Stibbe in her teaching practice. The testimonial describes the significant impact that the materials have had on students’ academic performance as well as personal outlook and behaviour.