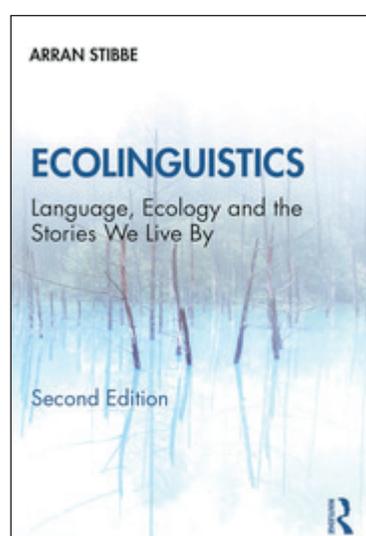


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Maria Bortoluzzi

Ecolinguistics. Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By

Arran Stibbe. 2021 (2nd ed.). Ecolinguistics. Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By. London-New York: Routledge, 260 pp., £ 27.99, ISBN 9780367428419



<https://www.routledge.com/Ecolinguistics-Language-Ecology-and-the-Stories-We-Live-By/Stibbe/p/book/9780367428419>

“Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By is a ground-breaking book which reveals the stories that underpin unequal and unsustainable societies and searches for inspirational forms of language that can help rebuild a kinder, more ecological world”. The quote is taken from the back cover of the second edition of the book by Arran Stibbe and it is a cogent summary of this remarkable text. The task is accomplished with scholarly knowledge, generosity and clarity and the result a must-read for specialists and non-specialists who want to understand how language impacts on and informs our behaviour towards the environment. In this book, verbal communication in context is viewed as an integral part of the ecosystem, rather than just a way of representing it. Thus, as Stibbe writes, ‘ecology’ is taken in its literal sense rather than just its metaphorical sense; and ecolinguistics focuses on the ecosystem life depends on and the communication that informs it.

The first edition of this book by Arran Stibbe (Professor of Ecological Linguistics at the University of Gloucestershire, UK) was published in 2015 and changed for many of us the way we view the relation between language and the environment. The first edition has had an extraordinary success thanks to Arran Stibbe's ability to communicate complex ideas about urgent matters such as the safeguard of the environment, in a reader-caring way. The second edition (2021) coherently follows suit with the commitment of pursuing clarity in scholarly writing; with this new edition he also confirms his involvement in generously disseminating ideas, research studies, and materials for teaching and learning. In fact, the second edition of the book *Ecolinguistics* can be seen as the text at the core of a series of resources published and initiatives carried out by Arran Stibbe in the last two decades: open access digital resources, connection with ecolinguists around the world through published research and the International Ecolinguistics Association (<http://ecolinguistics-association.org>), open access online course and webinar (<http://storiesweliveby.org.uk>), the journal *Language and Ecology* (<http://www.ecoling.net>), etc. The book *Ecolinguistics* is relevant for scholars, students and readers in a variety of fields: linguistics and applied linguistics, language as discourse, language and the media, language policy, language teaching and learning, sociology, economics, politics, scientific subjects, etc. And it also addresses readers interested in activism, human rights, policy making, advocacy, among others.

The new edition of the book builds on the strengths of the very successful first edition (2015), it is extensively updated and it includes one additional new chapter (Narratives). These changes make the new edition an even more crucial publication for whoever has an interest in ecolinguistics, environmental studies, ecoliteracy studies, ecocriticism. The second edition establishes further explicit logical links between theoretical aspects of ecolinguistics (within an updated and wide-ranging state-of-the-art literature), a detailed presentation of the ecosophy of the book, and how research results can act upon reality, choices, beliefs and values through awareness raising and action-taking. The new edition was finished during the first year of the pandemic (2020); it includes engaging reflections and examples of how this major global event revealed the impossibility to maintain previous stories, habits and beliefs: their problematic outcomes have become even more evident since the pandemic started spreading around the globe.

In each chapter Stibbe investigates one wide-ranging discourse area through the ecological lens: Ideologies, Framing, Metaphors, Evaluations, Identities, Convictions, Erasure, Salience and Narratives. He presents and discusses a variety of examples and case-studies to examine in-depth the impact language has on our behaviour and how we conceive ourselves and the ecosystem (including what we call 'life' and what we think of as 'inanimate'). Language is part of the ecology and the environment because humans through it create identities, narrate, exploit, but also creatively deal with situations, solve problems, and heal ourselves and the ecosystem.

In the book, our tendency towards an anthropocentric vision of the world shows its limitations and dangers; the dominant story of affluent, industrialised societies presents humans as unique and exceptional in nature. Conceptually this view justifies dominance and injustice; these discourses instantiating inequality and exploitation are analysed,

denounced and challenged by Stibbe. In the introductory chapter he explains how and why *stories we live by* are powerful; we do not perceive them as 'possible versions' of reality representation, but as normalised and uncontroversial 'reality', the way we are and things are. Ideology in stories we live by is hard to detect because it tends to be 'naturalised', become social habit and perceived as inevitable and objective, rather than an ideologically-based social-construct.

Throughout the book, Stibbe creates a web of analyses, reflections, relations and discussions that first are expanded and explored in-depth, and then are woven together in a tapestry of thought-provoking concepts, examples and applications. The book is a memorable reading experience to reflect on the stories which influence the ecosystems that life depends on, and a journey to reflect on our place in it.

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