# Когнітивні та комунікативно-прагматичні аспекти лінгвістики

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## Дискурс Британського музею щодо зміни клімату

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#### Анотація

Дискурси щодо проблеми зміни клімату досить регулярно продукують представники музейного сектора, зокрема Британським музеєм, який активно займається збереженням своїх колекцій від негативних наслідків зміни клімату. З огляду на те що дискурс Британського музею щодо зміни клімату недостатньо висвітлений у літературі, ця стаття представляє кількісне дослідження, **метою** якого  $\epsilon$  аналіз дискурсу Британського музею щодо цієї відносно недостатньо представленої проблеми. Методологічно дослідження ґрунтується на ролі мови в донесенні проблеми зміни клімату до широкої громадськості. Зокрема, дослідження спирається на вивчення часто вживаної лексики, пов'язаної зі зміною клімату, що може дати глибоке розуміння того, як Британський музей доносить проблему зміни клімату до своїх відвідувачів. З огляду на ці міркування, дослідження аналізує дискурс Британського музею про зміну клімату на наявність частотних слів та ключових слів у контексті (KWIC), пов'язаних з проблемою зміни клімату, щоб виявити можливі закономірності їх використання. Результати аналізу показують, що дискурс Британського музею про зміну клімату характеризується низкою частотних слів, що стосуються досліджень, колекцій творів мистецтва, зміни клімату, сталого розвитку та сталих практик. Обговорюючи ці результати, можна помітити, що лексичні одиниці, які прототипно пов'язані з проблемою клімату (наприклад, викиди СО2, підвищення температури та глобальне потепління), не входять до десятки найчастіше вживаних слів у корпусі. Натомість можна зазначити, що дискурс Британського музею про зміну клімату структурований активно вживаними самозгадками та самопокликаннями, такими як British, Museum, our та we. Цей висновок є досить новим, ураховуючи, що про нього не повідомлялося в попередніх дослідженнях, що вивчали комунікацію музейного сектора щодо зміни клімату. Можна зробити висновок, що дискурс Британського музею щодо зміни клімату узгоджується з аналогічними дискурсами британських корпоративних та політичних діячів, які розглядають проблему зміни клімату крізь дискурсивну призму самозгадок та самопокликань, дослідницьких зусиль щодо пом'якшення негативних наслідків зміни клімату та сталих практик для протидії кліматичній кризі.

Ключові слова: корпусне дослідження, дискурс про зміну клімату, частотна лексика, Британський музей

Introduction. Given that climate change is a phenomenon, climate multifaceted communication and discourses on climate change are associated with a diverse range of actors (Fløttum & Gjerstad, 2013; Kapranov, 2015a, 2017; Nerlich, Koteyko, & Brown, 2010). In this regard, it should be mentioned that business and political actors are reported to be routinely engaged in producing respective discourses on climate change (Kapranov, 2015b, 2018; Nyberg & Wright, 2016). In addition to the discursive voices on climate change by the business and political circles, discourses on climate change are actively formulated by a variety of other actors, for instance, scientists, members of climate change protest groups, artists and other representatives of cultural milieux (Boykoff, 2008; Chen et al., 2023; Kapranov, 2024a, 2024b). Fairly recently, the polyphony of discourses on climate change has been enriched by the museum sector (Marambio, 2023), in particular, by the British Museum, which is a public museum that boasts the largest collection of artefacts in the United Kingdom (the UK) and the entire world (Duncan, 2019; Tubb & Brodie, 2022).

The British Museum's iconic collections display the UK's cultural significance domestically and internationally (Levitt, 2015). Indeed, the British Museum seems to be a household name in the Anglophone countries owing to its unparallel and extensive inventory of renowned artefacts that represent the global cultural heritage as well as the UK's cultural legacy (Cuéllar, 2019; Duthie, 2011; Hamilton, 2018). In order to ensure a better preservation of its unique collections, the British Museums is involved in addressing and mitigating the negative consequences of climate change, which pose a substantial threat to the collections in a variety of ways (Cameron, Hodge, & Salazar, 2013). Among them, museum curators and conservators point to such climate change-related threats as high humidity, a rise in temperature, substandard air quality, and structural damage to the museums' buildings (Cameron & Neilson, 2014; Dibley, 2011). In addition to tackling the negative consequences of climate change that directly and indirectly impact upon the British Museum's collections and deposits, the Museum is engaged in providing information sources and hosting exhibitions associated with climate change (Hebda, 2007; Nieroba & Geisler, 2025).

Arguably, we may speak of the dual role of the British Museum's engagement in the issue of climate change. The duality is represented by (i) the British Museum's measures to mitigate the negative consequences of climate change that pose a significant threat to its collections and (ii) the Museum's activities that are aimed at raising public awareness of climate change. Whereas the aforementioned roles are clearly characterised by agency, i.e. the British Museum is seen as a proactive agent of climate change mitigation and information, there is a growing tendency to regard the world-renowned museums and their legendary artefacts as the object of climate change protest (Kapranov, 2023; 2024c). For instance, several iconic canvasses by Van Gogh have been objectified as the focal point of climate change protest by a number of radical climate change groups that seek to draw attention to the climate crisis (Kopińska, 2023; Viita-aho, 2025). These instances showcase a complex and multifaceted nature of the British Museum's roles in the issue of climate change (Dibley, 2011).

It should be noted that whilst the British Museum's involvement in the issue of climate change is quite adequately elucidated in the literature, fairly little is known about the British Museum's discourse and communication associated with climate change (Hayles et al., 2023). On this note, it should be emphasised that climate change communication by the leading museums in the Anglophone world is considered a critical aspect of their climate change mitigation policies (Patten & Lowan-Trudeau, 2024). Specifically, the museums' efficient and timely climate change communication may foster people's awareness of climate change

and its causes, as well as scientific debates associated with climate change perception by the general public (Sutton, 2020). Importantly, a linguistic investigation of discursive means that the British Museum employs in its climate change communication may provide a valuable insight into the Museum's climate change activities and practices (Wickham & Lehman, 2015).

As mentioned above, however, there are no published studies that provide a corpus-assisted account of the British Museum's discourse on climate change. Attempting to narrow the current gap in scholarship, this article presents a study that involves a quantitative investigation of the corpus of the British Museum's texts (official reports, documents, and blogs) on climate change. Particularly, the study aims at providing answers to the following **research question** (RQ):

**RQ**: What frequent lexical items are used by the British Museum in conjunction with the issue of climate change?

In order to offer answers to the RQ, this article is structured as follows. First, a review of the literature on climate change communication by museums in the Anglophone world is given. Second, the present study is described. Third, the article is concluded with the summary of the major findings and their **implications** to climate change communication.

Climate change communication by the museum sector in the Anglophone world: Literature review. There is a score of relatively recent publications on climate change communication by museums that are located in the Anglophone world and, particularly, in the countries that belong to the so-called Inner Circle of English, in which English is spoken as the first language, for instance, the UK, Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the

The literature demonstrates that climate change communication plays a strategic role in attracting tourists and visitors (Wickham & Lehman, 2015). In other words, climate change communication by the museum sector impacts

United States of America (Edwards, 2004).

positively upon the number of visitors. For instance, Wickham and Lehman (2015) argue that climate change and sustainable practices appear to be interrelated with museums' quotidian activities. Similarly to the findings reported by Wickham and Lehman (2015), Henry and Carter (2021) show that effective climate change communication affords numerous opportunities to small and medium-sized museums in the United States of America (the USA). Specifically, climate change communication fosters the general public's awareness of climate change and serves as a potent means of influencing public opinion on climate change (Henry & Carter, 2021). Moreover, effective climate communication by small and medium-sized museums is an important source of climate change content (Henry & Carter, 2021).

The study by Henry and Carter (2021) provides support to an earlier investigation conducted by Cameron, Hodge, and Salazar (2013), who claim that museums serve as reliable information sources in climate change awareness campaigns. Namely, Cameron, Hodge, and Salazar (2013) explain that the museum sector, at least in Australia, informs the visitors about the intricacies of climate change and equips them with practical knowledge, which empowers the public at large to make informed choices concerning the issue of climate change. Notably, the same argument is found in the study by Knutson (2019), who suggests that the museum sector in the USA and in a number of other Anglophone countries facilitates people's engagement in the issue of climate change. Knutson (2019, p. 108) indicates that "museums serve as network hubs to support community outreach and test whether and how museums can be used as catalysts in their communities, to help energise climate change education in informal learning organisations".

Knutson's (2019) study resonates with McGhie, Mander, and Underhill (2018), who show that museums "have tremendous potential for promoting public discourse and engagement around contemporary issues such as climate change. They

provide (potentially) one of the few venue types where people can express their feelings and values beyond their immediate social circle, something that schoolchildren and students enjoy but which is typically not available to adults. Museums offer adults the space and opportunity to continue to learn and engage with new ideas and concepts, and to interact with other people as a shared cultural and learning experience. [...] Given the obvious social dimensions of interventions and policies to mitigate climate change, once taken outside the museum, the learning that has taken place within a museum can also provide a context in which wider societal debates can take place" (McGhie, Mander, & Underhill, 2018, p. 345).

Notably, the educational role formulated by McGhie, Mander, and Underhill (2018) seems to be in unity with the argument developed by Parker, Cockerham, and Foss (2018), who specify that climate change communication by the museum sector facilitates science education and science outreach. In particular, Parker, Cockerham, and Foss (2018) describe climate change communication in terms of a strategic collaboration between learning and research undertaken by a number of museums in the USA. These authors have found that the museum sector's effective communication of climate change to the general public bears the mark of science-backed factual knowledge coupled with its creative representations by means of art and technology. Identically to Parker, Cockerham, and Foss (2018), a study by Newell (2018) showcases museums' communication about climate change that is aimed at fostering public engagement in the issue climate change. At the same time, however, Newell (2018) argues that in addition to relving exclusively on science-based communication, the museum sector should inform public about climate change from the standpoints of (i) science, (ii) human interest, and (iii) cultural aspects associated with climate change.

Likewise, a study by Lackner, Mohankumar, Damert, Petz, Meyer, Klug, and Reiter (2018) reveals that the museum sector's climate change communication typically involves dissemination of scientific findings, which, in turn, can empower the general public to appreciate (i) the magnitude of negative impacts of anthropogenic climate change, (ii) the mitigation of negative consequences of the current climate crisis, and (iii) the acceptance of individual and collective responsibilities for climate action. Interestingly, change Mohankumar, Damert, Petz, Meyer, Klug, and Reiter (2018) emphasise that climate change communication by the museum sector may be carried out not only by discursive means. Particularly, it may be embedded into the fabrics of museum exhibitions and the way the museum presents its exhibits (Lackner et al., 2018). In this regard, Lackner and her colleagues (2018) assert that both the discursive and multimodal forms of climate change communication should be embraced by the museum sector.

The importance of multimodal forms of climate change communication by the museum sector is described by Bikovska and Liew (2023). They investigate how the issue of climate change is communicated multimodally via the networking site (SNS) Facebook. To be precise, their research examines the way in which the museum sector uses Facebook in its communication about climate change and the environment (Bikovska & Liew, 2023). These researchers have the established that museums underutilise multimodal affordances associated with the dialogic role of multimodal interactions provided by Facebook in terms of climate change communication (Bikovska & Liew, 2023). To be fair, the study by Bikovska and Liew (2023) provides indirect support to the research investigation conducted by Rice, Rebich-Hespanha, and Zhu (2019), who show that an effective way to communicate the issue of climate change by museums should involve the integration of art. entertainment, and multimedia (for instance, movies, photographs, music, performance art, videogames, the Internet, etc.).

As illustrated above, there is a growing body of literature on climate change communication by the museum sector in the Anglophone world. However, as mentioned in the introduction, there is no published research on how one of the leading museums in the Anglophone world, the British Museum, communicates the issue of climate change by lexical means (Sutton, 2020). The study, which is further presented in the article, contributes to a better understanding of this under-researched area of expertise.

The present study. The present study is grounded in the previous research publications by Fløttum and Dahl (2012), Fløttum and Gjerstad (2013), and Kapranov (2023; 2024c; 2024d). These researchers emphasise the role of language and, specifically, lexical means in communicating the issue of climate change to the general public. Indeed, lexical means may provide a deep insight into how various stakeholders communicate the issue of climate change to lay audiences (Hanson-Easey et al., 2015; Wang & Huan, 2024). In this regard, Fløttum (2017, p. 1) argues that language does matter, especially in the current research on the meaning that people ascribe to climate change and on how climate change is portrayed in various contexts of climate communication.

In line with Fløttum (2017), one of the ways to study how language is involved in climate change

#

1

3

5

6

**Descriptive Statistics** 

Mean words

Maximum words

Minimum words

The total number of texts

The total number of words

Standard deviation words

communication is to examine words and word combinations that are used in conjunction with the type of climate change discourse at hand. Informed by Fløttum's (2017) ideas, the aim of the present study is to learn about the frequent lexica associated with the issue of climate change in a corpus of texts produced by the British Museum. In line with the aim of the study, the RQ is formulated (see introduction). Methodologically, the study seeks to replicate a recent research publication by Kapranov (2025), in which climate change discourse is investigated by means of processing a corpus of texts quantitatively in computer software AntConc developed by Anthony (2022).

The corpus of the present study is comprised of 14 texts on climate change that the British Museum makes public on its official website https://www.britishmuseum.org/. The inclusion of the texts into the corpus is based upon the studies by Fløttum (2010), Fløttum and Dahl (2012), Fløttum and Gjerstad (2013), Fløttum, Gjesdal, Gjerstad, Koteyko, and Salway (2014), and Kapranov (2015a; 2023; 2024c; 2024d; 2025), which account for the presence of the following keywords in climate change, climate change, fossil fuel, sustainability, and sustainable practices. The descriptive statistics of corpus are summarised in Table 1 below.

The Descriptive Statistics of the Corpus

 The Descriptive Statistics of the Corpus

 Value

 14

 14046

 1001.3

 440.9

 1921

 379

Table 1.

As mentioned above, the corpus is processed in AntConc (2022) in order to identify the frequently occurring words and keywords in context (KWIC) (for more details on the corpus analysis see Kapranov (2025) as well as Kapranov and Voloshyna (2023)). The results of the corpus analysis are given in the subsequent section of the article.

**Results and discussion**. The results of the corpus analysis have yielded the statistics

associated with the most frequently occurring words in the corpus. These statistics are presented in Table 2. It should be noted that only 30 frequently occurring notional words are included in Table 2, whilst auxiliary verbs, determiners, and prepositions are not represented. Additionally, it should be remarked that Table 2 involves the frequency of the occurrence of the most frequent notional words in absolute and normalised (per 1000 words) values.

Table 2. **30 Most Frequent Notional Words in the Corpus** 

#	Frequent Notional Words	Rank	Absolute Frequency	Normalised Frequency
1	Museum	6	261	18.6
2	British	12	95	6.8
3	Research	23	59	4.2
4	Our	25	55	3.9
5	We	25	55	3.9
6	Collection	29	44	3.1
7	Programme	30	43	3.1
8	Exhibition	31	42	3.0
9	New	32	41	2.9
10	Arctic	34	36	2.6
11	Objects	34	36	2.6
12	People	43	32	2.3
13	Energy	44	31	2.2
14	Years	45	30	2.1
15	All	46	29	2.1
16	UK	46	29	2.1
17	Project	48	28	2.0

18	World	48	28	2.0
	VV 011d	10	20	2.0
19	Culture	55	26	1.9
20	Knowledge	55	26	1.9
21	Future	58	25	1.8
21	1 dtdi C	50	20	1.0
22	Climate	61	24	1.7
23	Museums	61	24	1.7
24	Public	61	24	1.7
24	1 ublic	01	24	1.7
25	Art	64	23	1.6
26	Impact	64	23	1.6
27	Heritage	69	22	1.6
27	Heritage	0)	22	1.0
28	Sustainable	69	22	1.6
29	Development	71	21	1.5
20	Skills	71	21	1.5
30	SKIIIS	/1	Δ1	1.0

It is evident from Table 2 that the issue of climate change seems to be communicated by the British Museum in conjunction with such most frequently occurring words as Museum, British, research, our, we, collection, programme, and exhibition. Put differently, we can observe that lexical items that are prototypically associated with the issue of climate change, for instance CO2 emissions, rise in temperature, global warming (Fløttum & Dahl, 2012; Fløttum & Gjerstad, 2013; Kapranov, 2023; 2024c; 2024d; 2025), are not found among the top ten frequently occurring words in the corpus. Instead, we can note that climate change discourse by the British Museum is structured by the frequently occurring self-mentions and selfreferences, such as British, Museum, our and we. This finding is rather novel, given that it is not reported by the prior studies that investigate climate change communication by the museum sector (Bikovska & Liew, 2023; Edwards, 2004; Henry & Carter, 2021; Knutson, 2019; Lackner et al., 2018; McGhie, Mander, & Underhill, 2018; Newell,

2018; Parker, Cockerham, & Foss, 2018). However, the frequent occurrence of self-mentions in conjunction with the issue of climate change is reported in the studies that investigate climate change discourses by the Anglophone corporate and political actors (Kapranov, 2015b; 2017; 2018; 2024b; 2024d). Judging from the high occurrence of self-mentions, such as *our* and *we*, as well as the highly frequent self-reference *British Museum*, we may argue that the British Museum's climate change discourse converges on the respective climate change discourses by the British business and political actors.

Another finding that follows from the frequency data summarised in Table 2 shows that the British Museum's discourse on climate change centres quite heavily on the frequently occurring word *research*. This finding lends direct support to the prior studies (Cameron, Hodge, & Salazar, 2013; Henry & Carter, 2021; Knutson, 2019; McGhie, Mander, & Underhill, 2018) that point to the fact that the contemporary museum sector in the

Anglophone countries of the Inner Circle of English prioritises references to research and climate knowledge dissemination in their quotidian activities. Furthermore, the aforementioned finding supports the results of a number of prior studies (McGhie, Mander, & Underhill, 2018; Newell, 2018; Parker, Cockerham, & Foss, 2018), which have established that the museum sector in the Anglophone countries facilitates science education and science outreach as far as the issue of climate change is concerned.

The presence of the words *collection*, *programme*, and *exhibition* among the ten highly frequent words in the corpus (see Table 2) bolsters the previous research publications (Knutson, 2019; McGhie, Mander, & Underhill, 2018; Newell, 2018; Parker, Cockerham, & Foss, 2018), which emphasise the importance of museums' climate change communication by means of embedding the issue of

climate change into art exhibitions and specialised programmes of showcasing climate change-related collections. Concurrently with these findings, however, we may note that the results of the present investigation do not support the line of research (Bikovska & Liew, 2023) that underscores the facilitative effect of multimodality in the museum sector's practices associated with the issue of climate change.

Another quite interesting finding that emerges from the results of the corpus analysis consists in the fact that the word *climate* is not among the top ten most frequent words. Whilst it is rather frequent (rank = 61, absolute frequency = 24), it, nevertheless, does not seem to be prioritised to a substantial extent, which is evident from its distribution (see Table 2). Its contextual occurrence as a keyword in context (KWIC) is further illustrated by Table 3.

Table 3.

### Climate as a KWIC

#	Examples			
1	The dramatic loss of ice and erratic weather caused by climate change are putting unprecedented pressure			
2	Climate change is one of the most significant challenges facing			
3	The profound impact of climate change on Arctic Peoples and their way of life			
4	The slow recovery from near extinction caused by climate change stimulated an extraordinary artistic renaissance			
5	Climate change will affect us all and this exhibition provided	1		
6	The changing climate is an issue close to our hearts	1		
7	Climate is going to change. They meant climate change			
8	The Foundation supports initiatives within the arts, education and climate			
9	The challenge that we all face with the changing climate. It is a challenge that we must all address	1		
10	Projects that support environmental solutions and reduce the impacts of climate change on rich and diverse communities	1		

It follows from Table 3 that the British Museum's discourse on climate change is grounded in the notions of climate change as a challenge to humanity that puts unprecedented pressure upon human lives and entire communities. Furthermore, it is evident from Table 3 that the issue of climate change is represented discursively by the British Museum as a phenomenon that has the profound effect on each individual and, subsequently, needs to be addressed and resolved.

Yet, another finding that is evident from the corpus analysis (see Table 2) involves a high occurrence of the words *sustainable* (rank = 69, absolute frequency = 22) and *development* (rank = 71, absolute frequency = 21). In this regard, it should be mentioned that the high frequency of the notions of sustainability and sustainable development is reported in the prior studies on climate change discourse by a number of corporate and political actors in the UK (Kapranov, 2024d, 2025). Evidently, the British Museum's discourse on climate change fits into the mould of discursive routines associated with the political and business discourses on climate change in the UK.

Conclusions. This article involves a quantitative investigation of climate change discourse by the British Museum, one of the iconic museums in the UK and the entire Anglophone world. By means of analysing a corpus of texts authored directly by the British Museum, the study has uncovered that the British Museum's involvement in the issue of climate change is evident from its climate change discourse. It is characterised by the occurrence of a number of frequent notional words, such as *Museum*, *British*,

research, our, we, collection, programme, and exhibition. The analysis of the corpus shows quite clearly that lexical items, which are linked discursively to the issue of climate change, such as CO2 emissions, rise in temperature, global warming, etc. are not found among the top ten frequently occurring words in the corpus. Furthermore, the corpus analysis has not yielded the frequency of such words as protest, climate change protest, climate change action, which are normally related to the discourses on climate change by climate change protest groups. Instead, the results of the corpus analysis reveal that the British Museum's climate change discourse is characterised by such frequently occurring words as research and self-mentions (we, our).

In light of the aforementioned findings, it can be concluded that the British Museum's climate change discourse is in alignment with the analogous discourses by the British corporate and political actors, who regard the issue of climate change through the discursive lenses of self-mentions and self-references, research endeavours to mitigate the negative consequences of climate change, and sustainable practices to offset the climate crisis. These findings may serve as an indication of the preferred lexical means that are employed by the British Museum in its climate change discourse. Given that the British Museum is a beacon for other national museums in the Anglophone world, it can be assumed that the British Museums' discourse on climate change may be used as an example of best discursive practices by the museum sector.

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