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WHAT WATER DOES WITH US?
UNDERSTANDING WATER IN A MULTIPOLAR
ANGLO COMMUNITY

Abstract. Water is so omnipresent, so vital, and so inescapable, it seems that we take it for granted. But while scientists are discovering exciting new things about water's composition and forms, in the popular imagination, water remains a primal, 'simple,' 'elemental experience.' Water attracts us and repels us; water inspires fear in us. What stories do we tell about water in English? How do we understand it? The object of the present paper is to gain an accurate overall impression of the diverse, complex and contradictory ways the 'Anglo community' – as a diverse multipolar community living around the world – understands waters and its relation to them. Exploring 'English waters' will take us from Scotland to Australia, from the Bible to online linguistic corpora, from Canadian celebrations of lakes and ravines to forest fires in California.

Keywords: Anglo community; corpus; multipolar community; water; water supply; waters.

1. WATER, KEYWORDS AND CULTURE

Water is so omnipresent, so vital and so inescapable, we appear to take it for granted. For a long time – until modern science intervened to explain that water was a composite molecule composed of H₂O, and could, consequently, be broken down – it was believed that water was an element, indivisible. Indeed, nothing in 20th and 21st century celebrations of water, nothing in contemporary folk understandings of water, and certainly nothing in the marketing of various new forms of *Aquavita*, and *Bonaqua*, or other bottled spring water, seem to question or contradict the 'essential,' 'elemental' 'nature' of water, although all those words are worth questioning and revising.

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The present study is based upon dictionaries, electronic corpora, texts, and a specific corpus of hundred online English newspaper articles specifically created to investigate popular stories in the multipolar Anglo world-view about water, how English-speakers understand it, and how water-related questions are treated in politics and geopolitics. Stories about water, and water allegories in the media are constantly being reshaped and recycled in order to justify the ways certain actors would like the future to unfold. And water is not a neutral innocent player in the stories we tell about fluid relations, fluctuations, rising tides, and waves and tsunamis. Inflation, migrants, and social unrest are all framed in water-fearing scenarios: waves and tides are rising up and risk overwhelming us, in our imaginary lives at least. The same stories are constantly being assimilated anew and recycled to fit new philosophies and political agendas.

In the Tao (or Dao) understanding, water is stronger and more resistant than stone. At one level this appears to be an irrefutable truth. But that truth, so frequently referred to in popular philosophy and cultural theory, is cited – more often than not – to justify American management theory. According to the simple story, any pebble or rock on the seashore is permeated by erosion, thereby bearing witness to the fact that water is ultimately stronger than hard stone. Softness enfolds and erodes solidity. Flexibility, malleable softness, flowing and freedom of movement win over all that tries to remain firm and resist water.

However, these naïve truths are never innocent; and neither are words. For this reason, scholars from a wide variety of horizons ponder keywords, their cultural connotations, and their ideological implications (Williams; Bartmiński; Wierzbicka; Harkins & Wierzbicka; Goddard; Vaňková et al.; Underhill; Underhill and Gianninoto). Some are more interested in political terms, (see Williams; Goatly; Underhill and Gianninoto). Others, such as Wierzbicka (*Imprisoned in English*), Vaňková, and Ye, are more interested in the relationship between culture, and values; between words and world-views. But whether they are interested in specific terms or household words, all are concerned with the way words function as values within hierarchies and social exchanges and human interaction. These keyword scholars – working on various languages throughout the five continents of the world – would ask not only what we mean by water, but also how we *feel* about water. The question is not how we define water but how we both perceive and relate to waters in all their multifarious, fluctuating forms. Outstanding in this respect is the work of Bartmiński, whose *Słownik stereotypów*

i symboli ludowych: Kosmos (1980), devotes more than 100 pages to representations of, attitudes to, and feelings and intuitions about 'water' (*woda*) in the Polish worldview.

Keywords are not simply about the specialized terminology of specific individual academic disciplines. Words like citizen and individual, words like heart and home, words like water and fire are invariably harnessed by politically- and economically-aligned interest groups with overt and covert discourse strategies, and this should not be forgotten when we try get to grips with what water comes to mean for us as a society. We invoke the past often when it serves our interests, and ancient understandings in religion, philosophy, history, and mythology, often serve as pretexts for justifying even more ancient desires to gain control over resources and exert power over others.

In this way, scholars working on keywords within the framework of worldviews at the level of societies, cultures, and individuals are exploring various dimensions of the project of linguistic anthropology that goes back to Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) and which has informed the American tradition from Sapir in the 1930s and 1940s, up until more recently, Hymes. Cognitive scholars have often tended to focus on language and cognition in general as a function (Langacker; Fauconnier and Turner; Levinson), but there is no contradiction between their work and work that focuses more specifically on cultural, ideological, or indeed individual uses of keywords. Scholars like Lakoff have made significant contributions to conceptions of anger, heat and fire in metaphor theory, while Levinson and Langacker generate fundamental theories of space and spatial understanding in language and languages which are of obvious significance for understanding how we understand representations of expanses of water.

The present study should enable us to adjust our aims and objectives in order to focus on the cultural, social, political and economic representations of water. Water management, water resources, the celebration of shorelines, lakes and rivers, and their exploitation by both the tourist industry and by corporate hooligans contaminating water and groundwater by mining, dumping, and waste disposal will all form part of the complex scenarios in which water plays a leading role in the Anglo imagination. Pessimism and dystopian apocalypses, as well as watchdogs, sustainable development and responsible global governance will all form part of the story that unfolds.

2. PARADOXES IN LANGUAGE, STORIES, AND EXPERIENCE

These stories are not born *ex nihilo*. In cultures that rely heavily upon the *Old Testament* for their founding conceptions of society and history – and the United States of America, Poland and Portugal, among other nations, remain heavily indebted to Christian and Jewish conceptions of Creation and the meaning of life – water *is* part of Creation. Water is among the first ‘forms’ to emerge. Water is a seemingly malleable, changing, unstructured, or ‘structureless’ form.

- ¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Gen 1:1-2, *American Standard Version*) (*Bible Studies Tools*)

The Bible will take us on a long tour of the waters of the world, a tour in which John the Baptist will welcome and christen Jesus with water, while Jesus will turn water into wine. Water’s absence can be a scourge to those wandering the desert with Moses, but a miracle can bring water pouring from a stone. Wells are meeting places for love stories that will enable the crucial alliances of the Jewish people, such as the marriage between Rebecca and Isaac, the parents of Jacob. But water will wash away the Pharaoh pursuing Moses leading the people out of slavery to the Promised Land as the Red Sea opens up to facilitate their escape. Water is clearly powerful, omnipresent and essential for these narratives.

But from the outset, it would appear that however essential and elemental water is to our lives, there is ultimately something paradoxical in the nature of this ‘formless form.’ It is worth noting, moreover, that water is singular in English, an uncountable noun, and the same can be said of German (*das Wasser*), Spanish (*agua*), Italian (*aqua*), French (*eau*), Czech (*voda*), and Polish (*woda*). Langacker (128-146) would consider ‘water’ in English as a ‘mass noun’ like ‘gold’ as opposed to a ‘count noun,’ such as ‘diamond/diamonds’ (129-131).

Nonetheless, Langacker is forced to contend with ambiguous counter examples of mass and count nouns when it comes to water. He quotes, for example: ‘You need a lot of lake for a speedboat race. [and ...] I want two lemonades and a water.’ (143). These examples clearly contradict the mass/count distinction. And indeed, in the opening of *Genesis*, water appears as

a plural, in the various versions ranging from the *King James Version*, from the beginning of the seventeenth century down to present day revisions. And it is plural form that asserts itself in various versions in the aforesaid languages.¹

Why is this? Perhaps because, from the very beginning, water appears to be multiple, complex, and paradoxical in nature. Certainly, in literature and language in general, stories about water often highlight the contradictory experience of this inescapable ‘element.’ Everyday expressions, however commonplace, do not escape this complex relationship with different kinds of water. Consider for example:

- Like water off a duck’s back,
- To take to something like a duck to water

The duck belongs to water, and is generally understood as forming part of the lake or pond experience. But for the duck to be in water, the water must not permeate the duck’s carefully groomed plumage. Not only are we dealing with different quantities and capacities of water, we are also setting up different spatial stories about bodies and movement, locomotion, immersion, penetration, and protection. Each story may prove coherent and logical in itself, but we are constantly jumping from story to story, from logic to logic, when we consider what we do with water and what water does with us; what contains water; and what can be contained in water as a container space. Paradoxical but true, water is both a penetrating force, and a welcoming space.

Water is part of history and identity. In the songs of a land that made its fortune and founded its empire of the seas, England’s patriots have always sung:

- Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves!
Britons never, never, never, shall be slaves! (*Rule Britannia*)

But in the literature of that maritime nation that jostled with France, Holland, Portugal and Spain for mastery of their colonies overseas throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the seas promised danger and excitement, risks and rewards. And one of the leading English romantic poets, Samuel Taylor Coleridge is writing within that tradition in his *Lyrical*

¹ The Lublin School of Ethnolinguistics once more proves radically innovative and insightful in this respect, in that Bartmiński’s Dictionary (1980) already provides distinct entries for ‘woda,’ and ‘wody żywe,’ water and live waters, respectively.

Ballads, (1772–1834), when the agonizing protagonist of his *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* bewails:

- Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where
Nor any drop to drink.

(The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Part 2, lines 119-122)

Water is water perhaps, but some waters taunt us by refusing to quench our thirst and keep us alive. And the cruel irony of the ballad lies in the fact that the shipwrecked seafarer risks dying of thirst, for lack of water, on a raft in the great expanse of the ocean.

Water can be seen as the cradle of life or the grave, and nowhere is this double nature so evident as in the poem, ‘*Les plaintes d’un Icare*,’ in *Les fleurs du mal* (Baudelaire), by the French romantic poet, Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), that tells the story of Icarus – buried in the Abyss – falling from great heights to drown in the sea.

His Icarus is one of many (*un Icare*), a ‘modern Icarus’ that cannot hope to find glory in his self-destructive striving. Icarus escapes the prison tower, ascends into the sky, the atmosphere, then, as the sun melts the wax of his manmade wings, he falls to his death drowning in the sea, the hydrosphere.

In the Ancient World, the two spheres are clearly separate realms. As in the Old Testament, the beasts belong on the ground and the fowl belong in the skies, the heavens. Creation is about order and organizing the separation of the spheres, in the heavens and on earth. But once again, H₂O and scientific understanding of water will remind us that the division of the heavens and the seas is not so simple and that both are virtually unthinkable in a waterless world. Moisture, clouds, hail, sleet, snow, dew, evaporation, icebergs, the icy tundras, and the continents of ice at the north and south poles all remind us that separating water, land, and air is part of a naïve representation of the physical world, a kind of fairy tale folk understanding that helps us to negotiate our everyday lives, but doesn’t bear up to close scrutiny. The facts are more complex, and water’s fundamental complexity is part of the facts.

How are we to understand what we mean then by ‘water.’ Translation studies specialists, ethnolinguists and linguistic anthropologists might ask, how the constant translation from language to language on the Internet contributes to generating a shared understanding of water, in simple

narratives that help us make sense of our lives. How do ecological, economic, geopolitical, and geographic questions and debates impact debates and the way discussions of water are framed in the emerging global community? These are big questions of crucial importance. But before we go on to explore and compare linguistic diversity and global governance, it would seem worthwhile to establish how water works in the worldviews of the English-speaking communities of the world. Is the present-day Anglo understanding of water a shared experience? And do Scots, Australians, Canadians, Americans, and the English share the same understanding of water? If not, how do the various linguistic communities of the Anglo world represent water?

3. DICTIONARIES

For a mainstream standard dictionary, like the *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* online, 'water' is defined first and foremost as a noun, and two primary meanings are given. In the first meaning, we are dealing with the phenomenon of water:

- The liquid that descends from the clouds as rain, forms streams, lakes, and seas, and is a major constituent of all living matter and that when pure is an odorless, tasteless, very slightly compressible liquid oxide of hydrogen H₂O which appears bluish in thick layers, freezes at 0° C and boils at 100° C, has a maximum density at 4° C and a high specific heat, is feebly ionized to hydrogen and hydroxyl ions, and is a poor conductor of electricity and a good solvent.

In the second meaning, we are dealing with:

- a particular quantity or body of water: such as
 - **a(1)waters** \ 'wō-tərz, 'wā- \ *plural* : the water occupying or flowing in a particular bed
 - **(2)chiefly British** : LAKE, POND
 - **b**: a quantity or depth of water adequate for some purpose (such as navigation).

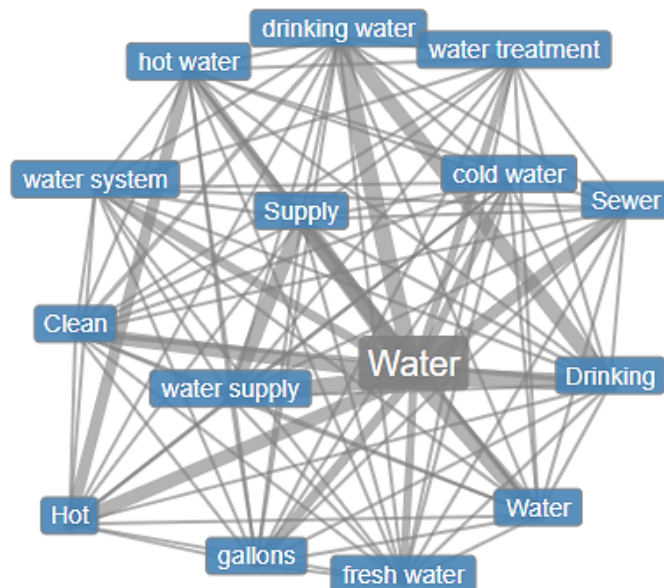
This coincides with Langacker's account of both mass and count nouns on the one hand, and the perplexing counter examples which make water possible as both (Langacker). The Merriam-Webster's Dictionary notes the plural use of 'waters,' but as with other standard English dictionaries, it highlights the modern usage of 'waters' referring to the surrounding waters of islands and nations:

- **waters plural:** a band of seawater abutting on the land of a particular sovereignty and under the control of that sovereignty

Interestingly, *The Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* reminds us that 'water' is also used as a transitive verb (to moisten, sprinkle, or soak with water, to water the lawn), just as 'water' can be used in adverbial forms (to go by water). Water functions as an adjective in 'water supply' or 'water works,' or as a part of a composite word or compound, for example, in 'water-colour.'

4. CORPUS FINDINGS

Online electronic corpora tend to consolidate this understanding of water. This certainly appears to be the case, if we consider the association graph generated by the *Leipzig Wortschatz* corpus, generated from an English news corpus based on texts gathered from up to 2016 with 156,934,303 sentences.



After: *Leipzig Wortschatz corpus* (Universität Leipzig), https://corpora.uni-leipzig.de/de/res?corpusId=eng_news_2016&word=water, accessed 03.10.2020.

Water is certainly water according to this source. Water is diverse and varied, in both its physical and grammatical forms, but it remains clearly part of one single coherent entity; discernible, treatable, and manageable. Water can be pure, polluted, cleaned, treated, stocked, heated, consumed and rejected, channelled into canals, stocked and supplied.

The first ten examples generated by the *Leipzig Wortschatz corpus* confirm this:

- Mains **water**, electricity, private drainage, oil fired central heating.
- Liquid **water** is essential for life.
- Do you prefer bottled or tap **water**?
- Cover and set over simmering **water**.
- Our **water** bottles froze solid.
- Or running **water**.
- Drain off any excess **water**.
- The vast majority do not pay **water** bills, hook-up fees or sewer bills.
- Too much **water** causes fungus.
- Density would indicate whether a planet is rocky, mostly gas, or perhaps a **water** world.

Water is running or frozen, liquid or solid, bottled or free and flowing. You need it for life and for everyday living. We pay for it, and use what we need and get rid of excess. Water keeps us alive, but can cause dangerous phenomena which are not strictly speaking ‘living forms,’ like fungus. Society, the state and local government, provide water, and consumers consume it.

The 500 million word *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) provided 324 204 entries for ‘water,’ thereby demonstrating – if that were really required – the omnipresence of water. The first hundred examples consulted related to frozen water, water for farms, bottled water, heated water, cold water, the ratio between acid and water, clean water, contaminated water, purifying water, diesel water, the quantity of water, no water or a lot of water, recycled water, drinking water, pressurizing water, high water, harsh water, homeopathy and water, open water, things are water-resistant, and things that are underwater, or above water. Sips of water, splashes of water, sea water, and tap water all figured in the first 100 COCA examples studied. And water was not simply a product; it was also an active force. The COCA examples highlighted the ‘power of water,’ ‘the current of water’ and ‘the pressure of water.’ Just as supplying water was important, so saving water came up in the examples.

The COCA has recently modified its collocation search function, and it now enables us to compare the ways we associate the different forms of water depending on whether we are searching for the noun, the adjective, the adverb, or the verb. If we consider the first 20 collocates, we can obtain a fairly coherent overview of the way ‘water’ is being used:

Corpus of Contemporary American English				ACCOUNT			
SEARCH		WORD		CONTEXT		ACCOUNT	
5583	2.71	food		7490	4.51	drink	
4460	4.67	supply		2578	2.63	fill	
4089	3.72	cup		2156	4.18	pour	
3868	2.51	air		1787	5.43	boil	
3773	3.58	glass		1735	4.53	flow	
3447	4.37	bottle		1485	5.03	cup	
3403	3.77	surface		1091	2.98	mix	
2993	5.53	drinking		1000	3.01	wash	
2979	3.01	quality		975	4.28	pump	
2738	3.34	ice		961	5.76	splash	
2614	3.04	river		954	3.49	supply	
2503	4.10	salt		893	4.23	drain	
2281	2.69	resource		865	3.37	swim	
1927	3.08	lake		838	5.68	rinse	
1841	3.32	temperature		835	4.62	soak	
1750	3.90	soil		705	3.40	float	
1699	5.36	gallon		669	4.86	drip	
1698	6.78	vapor		665	2.63	stir	
1675	2.70	fish		640	3.89	heat	
1591	4.29	electricity		623	5.35	tread	
1555	3.20	pool		610	3.07	cool	
6562	3.80	hot					
5802	4.13	cold					
4022	4.25	clean					
3320	4.05	warm					
2835	3.46	fresh					
2490	7.49	boiling					
2480	3.02	deep					
1921	4.70	running					
1900	7.85	bottled					
1555	5.21	shallow					
1093	4.94	liquid					
798	5.48	muddy					
635	4.00	coastal					
622	6.79	salted					
552	6.05	contaminated					
551	8.20	potable					
505	5.59	murky					
497	4.70	icy					
458	3.83	municipal					
435	7.24	distilled					
423	3.82	freezing					
165	4.29	eg					
134	4.07	downstream					
91	3.75	upstream					
67	2.89	offshore					
57	3.00	inland					
48	3.23	uphill					
43	4.80	knee-deep					
37	2.76	chemically					
20	4.30	dente					
19	2.70	southward					
18	2.51	lazily					

Where is water? In the lake, in the river, in the water supply, in the glass, or in the pool? What form does it come in? In the air, in a bottle, in ice, or in the ground? What is in water? Salt? Fish? And how does water pass from its liquid to its gaseous form in vapour? These are the questions that come into play when ‘water’ is used as a noun in the COCA corpus. In the nominal form, the COCA collocates for ‘water’ tend to highlight products, bearing witness to the Internet usages COCA heavily relies upon in fuelling its corpus, privileging marketing, politics, and scientific reviews over spoken usage, colloquial forms, and the idioms usually explicated in dictionaries.

How does this compare to the British National Corpus (BNC) with its smaller but more carefully screened and selected examples in which literary examples are given a higher profile? With a one hundred million-word corpus, the BNC, which dates back to the early 1990s, has only a fifth of the words taken on board by the COCA, but even so, the fact that ‘water’ generated only 34 098 examples in the BNC, as opposed to the COCA’s

324 204 entries, is somewhat surprising. This makes ‘water’ only half as frequent in the British twentieth century corpus as opposed to COCA’s up to the minute American Internet resources. Water appears to be increasingly discussed in public debate, at least in the US.

As might be expected, the BNC generated examples that overlapped with the COCA’s examples: water was hot or cold or warm, running, supplied, paid for or unpaid for. But the dramas, and the British Tabloid newspapers from which the BNC drew some of its examples tended to develop storylines more than the examples generated by the COCA. Water was drawn on farms, water slapped against the side of streams. The following examples would have appeared somewhat surprising against the backdrop of the collocations and the first examples generated by either the COCA or the *Leipzig Wortschatz*:

- to live in disgrace. I would wear rags and live upon rye bread and **water** rather than be a harlot to the greatest man in the world.
- Rachel’s or Rebecca’s nursing their children I can answer that the one drew **water** at a well for her father’s flocks, another baked cakes on a hearth
- the perfect and absolute silence of the wet lazy slap of **water** against water and the rolling creak of timber (BNC).

(British National Corpus, BNC)

These examples recount dramatic tales of the past, the fates of men and women, and they evoke the Biblical tale of Rebecca going to the well. From Biblical times, the resource of water was carefully guarded and preserved, and access to it was culturally codified. Who gets access to water, when, and in exchange for what, depends upon who we are and which groups or clans we belong to. Water rights and political alliances, romance and marriage alliances are facts of life that emerge out of fact that water both means and symbolizes life itself for individuals and communities.

As we shall see in negotiations in the Northern Territory of Australia, things have not changed in this respect. In the third more modern example above, water evokes a mood, and we are invited to attune ourselves to the rhythms of nature, and to the gentle violence of the little waves slapping one another. Water here is paradoxically both active and passive partner in this repetitive, rhythmic, reassuring slapping.

Even when the BNC examples used standard idioms, they used them in novel ways contrasting, for example, the way a Baptist Christian adapted to a new lifestyle:

- He took to show-business like a duck to **water**. He began writing jokes and scripts for TV shows

Entering water, in the BNC examples, often involved dramatic narratives of struggling against drowning:

- I was thrashing about in the **water** with all my clothes on and ended up being dragged down.
- I suddenly found myself on the same side as the shark and got out of the **water** as fast as I could.
- TV ACTRESS Jennie Garth was pulled unconscious from the **water** after a hair-raising film stunt backfired.
- The jet-ski shot out of the **water** and hit me on the head. I was unconscious in the **water** for several seconds

The last example was taken from *The Daily Mail*, a tabloid newspaper that has a vested interest in drama and tragedy, especially when it comes to famous personalities. But the BNC also generated various examples related to health, wellbeing, and diet and recipes, in relation to water:

- a liquid feed -- seaweed-based ones are best; an eggcupful to a can of **water**.
- I didn't originate in Egypt for nothing. I avoided ice cubes, salads and water -- I even cleaned my teeth in mineral **water** -- and I still fell prey to a stomach bug.

Cooking ingredients and how they work together form part of our everyday understanding of water, how it works, and how it interacts and blends in with other liquids and solids. This enables us to use our conceptual understanding of water to project the relations of fusion and compatibility to other walks of life in conceptual metaphor narratives. Human relations are understood in terms of water and hydrophilic and hydrophobic partners, partners that like or dislike water. One such example was found among the first 100 examples cited by the BNC:

- We're like oil and vinegar, oil and **water**. We just don't mix.

Water was used as a means of attacking or humiliating someone no less than three times in the 100 BNC examples, as in the following one:

- WHAT a wonderful response from the creditor of Land Travel who threw **water** over the boss

And idiomatic expressions related to water came up when it came to opposing projects:

- When I found out about his background, I just had to blow it out of the water. It will end there.

Water bills, water consumption and water contamination all formed part of debates on water supplies, and water watchdogs were cited as helping ensure the consumers' and citizens' rights and services. The quality of drinking water, and polluted water came up in this context. But amusingly, water pistols were as common as water bills. Fun, sport, danger, and pleasure were all clearly central to water, or rather, water appeared to play a central role in the pleasures, desires and fears of the British, if indeed we can believe that the BNC represents the imagination of a shared linguistic community.

To what degree did the collocates confirm these impressions? On the whole, the collocates tended to confirm a converging conception of the associations related to water in the COCA and the BNC, despite the BNC's tendency to highlight drama, narrative and personal accounts. The first forty collocates for water in the BNC were: hot, water, cold, supply, pollution, drinking, surface, fresh, boiling, supplies, temperature, deep, electricity, tap, warm, tank, glass, clean, soft, salt, drink, flow, gas, mineral, edge, bowl, Thames, shallow, filled, soil, bath, heat, vapour, heating, pipes, acid, bucket, bottle, ice, poured (*British National Corpus*, BNC).

5. WATER IN THE PRESS

Without question, the best way to gain an overall impression of how a keyword is being used in the press, is to read the press on a daily basis, getting to know the authors' styles and interests and the editorial line. But as we are trying to establish how different linguistic communities exist within the global multipolar Anglo community, we will have to make do for the moment with a cross section of usages taken from various countries. *The Glasgow Herald*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Toronto Star*, and Sydney's *The Daily Herald* were selected for this purpose. The papers' search engines were used to generate 20 examples of articles related to water on one single day, Saturday, October 3, 2020.

5.1. SCOTTISH WATERS

The Glasgow Herald's examples clearly highlighted the ecological dimension of water, with one article:

- Scientists bid to put Scotland's mines at the centre of green energy renaissance

In other articles, the Orkney Islands were developing strategies to develop 'a world class deep water facility' for various industries. Gardening advice on houseplants paralleled this concern for developing ecologically healthy attitudes to nature, water and to each other as human beings. And wildlife was not excluded from the *Brave New World* scenario the Scottish newspaper was promoting, with invitations to celebrate both Nature and Scotland in patriotic articles about the bottlenosed whales off the Scottish shores that nature-lovers can enjoy watching:

- Bottlenose whales spotted off Isle of Cumbrae: "(...) When we were swimming we could see them further out the bay from us and that's when they jumped right out the water – it was spectacular to see."

The first twenty examples in *The Herald* gave a go-ahead, proactive, progressive, citizen-focused impression of how we should deal with water:

- Let's charge ahead with the heating revolution in Scotland.
- Galleries: Lesley Banks celebrates the water of life on Scotland's canals.

It wasn't all upbeat. One article gave an account of darker sides to water management. In Glasgow, the City council was striving to rid the water system of 'a brain eating microbe' with sanitation methods which could take up to two months. Another article gave facts on the job losses at a Strathmore bottled water plant. And two articles voiced concerns over the privatization of water. However, both articles presented the Scottish authorities as safeguarding the interests of Scottish citizens facing the threat of Westminster policies and private interests. Water sports were represented in an article on swimmers preparing for the Olympics. When danger did come into the frame, in *The Herald*, it was in an article on Donald Trump, dating from September 10, 2020:

- Several boats sank or crashed into rocks in a water parade in support of President Trump on a crowded Lake Travis in Texas.

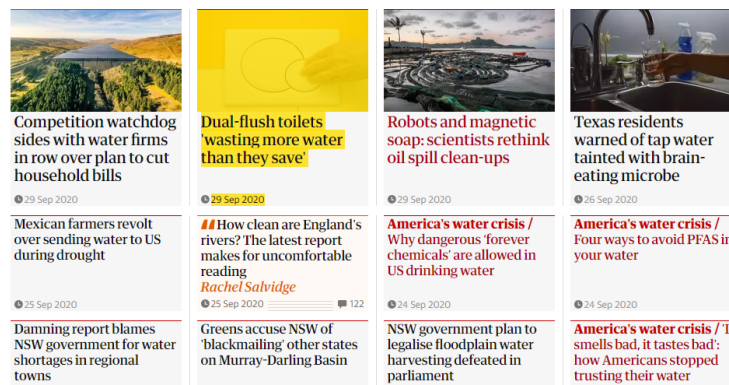
The irony is palpable, and it appears to amuse both Scottish journalists and their readers. This is characteristic of the rather chauvinistic way the Scots view themselves and the world. When Scottish personalities are depicted in the water, they take on a much more congenial and charming allure than Donald Trump:

- Sean [Connery] – and I remember this because [costume designer] Jim Acheson blew a gasket – waded into the water and carried me to the shore, but ruined his costume.

These articles all contribute to consolidating an underlying logic: the Scots love water, and they love it because it's Scottish. Scots are loved for saving others from the water. The water is full of wonderful (Scottish) wildlife, which foreign tourists and Scots enjoy admiring. Less congenial more contentious stories about Scotland and water sports are downplayed. Hunting and fishing, internationally renowned Scottish industries, did not appear among the articles that came up. From *The Glasgow Herald's* perspective, the Scots protect water and the sustainability of water, and they protect water from those who would pollute it or misuse it, and those who would deprive Scots of their healthy life-giving resource.

5.2. ENGLISH WATERS

Was this patriotic, proactive, green, progressive water policy mirrored in the English press? The twenty articles that *The Guardian's* search function generated were equally ecological in nature, but far less upbeat. Many alarmist articles were highlighted in scenarios that contrasted greatly with the tales of fun, sports and pleasures that the British National Corpus generated back in the early 1990s. In *The Guardian's* articles, when technology was explained, it was designed to clean up after a disaster. Modern water-saving gadgets were exposed as fraudulent, and ominous questions were asked about how healthy England's waters are. The overview of articles found below give the general impression of dismay, distress, and angst when water appears in public debates in contemporary England:



Robots usually symbolize the future, but here, they are being used to face up to a very dirty present day with oil spills to clean up. Dual-flush toilets are a con: they waste more water than they save. How clean are England's rivers? This rhetorical question leaves little space for hope. Watchdogs do exist, but *The Guardian* evidently has less confidence in England's watchdogs than *The Glasgow Herald's* journalists have in their Scottish counterparts. In England, under pressure, they side with the water firms in a row over household bills. America's water crisis merits two articles in this English daily paper. And in a third, Mexicans are exploited by their mighty neighbour and forced to revolt, as their government gives in to the US in sending Mexican water across the border during the drought in the summer of 2020.

In contrast to the Scottish articles, although both newspapers take a critical social perspective, the tone and worldview of *The Guardian* is clearly more pessimistic and lacking in patriotic spirit. England's water, and the waters of the world are contaminated: this is the dystopian outlook that we are invited to share, and there seems little hope of working solutions for sustainable development either in England or in the world. These stories are no more than anecdotes within the English worldview. They are corroborated by neither our corpus findings from the BNC nor wider reading in English. It would, therefore, be absurd to reduce the English outlook on water to such pessimism. Nonetheless, if these articles are written and read, it is because they activate ongoing narratives and help give shape to the way the English understand and discuss questions related to water at the present time; and those stories and those conceptions and those attitudes, should be taken into account within the framework of the English worldview as a complex evolving whole.

There is, of course, much more water in Scotland than in England in both relative and geographic terms, and the Lake District in Cumbria is overshadowed by the great lochs of Scotland and the sea lochs of the highlands and islands. Scotland's most famous export depends upon water in more way than one: 'whiskey' derives from the Gaelic meaning 'water of life,' like French 'eau de vie.' Similarly, 'wódka' in Polish and 'vodka' in Czech, and Russian (водка) derive from the diminutive form of 'woda,' 'voda' and 'вода' in those languages respectively. The quality and variety of the waters of Scotland must be preserved, if the richness and diversity of one of

Scotland's main exports is to be safeguarded.² This may go some way to explaining why government, the media, trade, and the tourist industry give such an upbeat image of Scottish waters.

5.3. CANADIAN WATERS

Canada's great lakes with their endless vastness put Scotland in perspective, however. So how does a Canadian newspaper represent the waters of the third largest nation on the face of the earth after Russia and Antarctica? The first twenty references to come up in Toronto's *The Star*, depicted the struggle of citizens against nature in a story in which '[i]solated Saint John residents brave flood waters to leave [an] area.'

- Some residents of Saint John, N.B., isolated by rising floodwaters, walked through strong currents in knee-deep water to get out of their neighbourhood. One resident said she made the trek because she didn't want to miss her granddaughter's baptism. (*The Toronto Star*)

Water management is clearly a serious concern for Canadians, so it should come as no surprise that technology relating to ecological solutions for generating energy came up among the Canadian articles. Why wind turbines came up in a search for 'water' remains uncertain, but it is probably because many wind turbines are implanted offshore. In one article, readers were told, in no uncertain terms:

- Cleantech can drive growth: Canada needs to buy into it, or be left behind.

Water was clearly a matter of life and death in the Canadian wilderness.

- No alarm before deadly volume of water gushed from dam, killing man in BC

This in no way discouraged Canadians from enjoying their wilderness, however, and other articles sang the praises of the sublime beauty of the landscapes. The following articles made that clear:

- Six best fall drives and hikes in the Ottawa Valley to see fall colours.

² 1715, from Gaelic *uisge beatha* "whisky," literally "water of life," from Old Irish *uisce* "water" (from PIE **ud-skio-*, suffixed form of root **wed-* (1) "water; wet") + *bethu* "life" (from PIE **gwi-wo-tut-*, suffixed form of **gwi-wo-*, from root **gwei-* "to live"). According to Barnhart, the Gaelic is probably a loan-translation of Medieval Latin *aqua vitae*, which had been applied to intoxicating drinks since early 14c. (compare French *eau de vie* "brandy"). Other early spellings in English include *usquebea* (1706) and *iskie bae* (1580s). <https://www.etymonline.com/word/whiskey>

- Spectacular views and a birdwatcher's paradise at Rattray Marsh Conservation Area.

The latter example was the only article among the hundred articles in English consulted to praise marshland as the original and essential habitat for a wide variety of birds and animals. Responsible water management was encouraged in some of the Canadian articles:

- Great Lakes property owners warned again to prepare for fall, winter storms.

And tough questions were asked in public debate.

- Testing the waters: Do Regina's asbestos-cement water mains pose a risk?

Elsewhere things appeared to go less smoothly. The Canadian newspaper was the only one to pick up on a European story of death by flooding, the very day the newspapers were consulted (03.10.2020):

- One killed, 25 missing in severe floods in Italy and France.

This tends to indicate that Canadians take water seriously, but do not necessarily expect others to do so. The French and Italians were victims, but they were not the only ones. The headlines for a curiously obscure article on an American murder trial were:

- Kansas water park owner, designer charged with murder over boy's death.

And the crucial causal link between fire and water was made in one ominous headline, although this was not for Canada but for California:

- Better weather won't keep California from grim fire landmark.

These articles tend to suggest that Canadians love their water, consider it as a wonderful sustainable resource that must be preserved, protected, but also enjoyed admired and praised.

5.4. AMERICAN WATERS

How did the Canadians' neighbours face up to water-related challenges, to the risks to America's water supply, and to the difficulties of drought-ridden states? *The New York Times*, tackled these questions head on, in one of the first twenty articles studied:

- A Climate Reckoning in Fire-Stricken California: If climate change was a somewhat abstract notion a decade ago, today it is all too real for Californians

fleeing wildfires and smothered in a blanket of smoke, the worst year for fires on record.

- The engineering and land management that enabled the state's tremendous growth have left it more vulnerable to climate shocks – and those shocks are getting worse.

The US was not alone in its plight. Its challenges were perceived as part of a worldwide struggle. Americans were not alone in suffering the effects of global warming, or the mismanagement of industry. The following *New York Times* article recounted the opposition of residents to a mining giant held responsible for pollution.

- Residents of the Papua New Guinea region have accused the mining giant of environmental and human rights violations and asked for an investigation.

Back in the US, waterproof products were suspected of having disastrous consequences for the health:

- These Everyday Toxins May be Hurting Pregnant Women and Their Babies: PFAS, industrial chemicals used to waterproof jackets and grease-proof fast-food containers, may disrupt pregnancy with lasting effects.

And children were at risk from contaminated water following the Covid-19 Lockdowns:

- A number of schools found the bacteria that causes Legionnaires' disease in their water, and experts say more should expect to see it.

So all was not well, and there seemed little chance of putting things right, for Americans and for future generations. There is a parallel in the apocalyptic subtext to such articles in the English articles. Like the English articles in *The Guardian*, watchdogs and commissions, inquiries and inspections, sanctions and legal proceedings are at work, but they invariably seem to confirm bad news, rather than acting as safety measures in preserving and protecting the water supply and water as a natural resource or an essential part of the culture and tourist industry.

In the Canadian and the Scottish articles the themes raised often related to pleasures and preserving eternal natural resources for the future, while in their neighbouring countries (The US and England) the mainstream press appeared to be promoting an unmitigatedly dire scenario. The paradox is worth pondering. The Canadians and the Scots who spoke of water scrutinize, admire, praise and enjoy what they know and what they feel belongs to

them, and they recognize that things can and often do go wrong at home and elsewhere. The American and English articles appear to adopt a fatalistic point of view; things are bad at home and all over the world. The tone of the articles probably leaves readers feeling resigned: What can be done, if anything?

Neither the COCA nor the BNC support such a fatalistic mood or attitude. A selection of twenty articles is far too small to justify asserting such a caricatured contrast. And this paper can only raise questions and help generate working hypotheses. Further research looking into literature and songs, films, series and poems would be required. But perhaps by introducing a fifth source to these Anglo conceptions of water, we can escape the binary nature of this opposition between pessimistic and responsible approaches to water management. What happens if we look into how an Australian newspaper presents ‘water’?

5.5. AUSTRALIAN WATERS

The Morning Herald in Sydney is no stranger to disaster stories. Natural disasters and risks to lives formed the major part of the twenty articles on water studied. Two articles on droughts in New South Wales related that rivers and lakes were finally receiving water for the first time in eighteen months in drought-stricken Pooncarie Wier and in the Menindee Lakes. *The Sidney Herald* related various stories of disasters:

- Council flooded with chlorine smelling water complaints
- Flash flooding leaves Derbyshire streets under water
- Seaplane sinks in water after crashing in Lake Washington, Seattle
- Submerged cars stranded on major London road after water mains bursts
- Waterspout swirls off the coast of Florida
- Vehicles stranded in high water as deadly water floods Busan, South Korea

However, most of these disaster scenarios were happening on the other side of the world, far from Sydney. When the Australian newspaper spoke of water in Australia, indigenous Australians were protesting against abuses endangering their drinking water:

- NT [Northern Territory] councils unite to demand safe drinking water laws: The four Northern Territory land councils have united in condemning the ‘unacceptable’ lack of protection for safe and adequate drinking water in the NT.

The crucial question of preserving the purity of the water supply was clearly a topical question, one that was the subject of an exhibition in Darwin, the capital of the Northern Territory.

- Water will be the front and centre at an exhibition opening in Darwin tonight that explores political agenda, security and protection of the natural resource.

But it was also clear that the politics and economics behind resolving water issues were murky indeed, when the headlines of one article in the *The Sydney Herald* were:

- New Power and Water boss's six-figure salary revealed.

Australians who have been suffering from record droughts over the past three years, and unprecedented forest fires, incurring great losses to both property, farms, livestock and wildlife are looking into their water issues, and those issues are hotly debated in negotiations between the capital, Canberra, and the indigenous Australians. But judging from *The Daily Herald's* stories, the Australians appear to have a voyeuristic taste for disaster, and that taste seems to be appeased as much by looking beyond Australia's coastlines as by looking inland. For our purposes, this gives a new facet to our multipolar Anglo worldview. And it forces us to face up to a diverse and complex variety of relationships to water existing within what we might call 'the Anglo cultural mindset.'

6. CONCLUSIONS

The first thing that becomes obvious from this short study is that when we deal with English speakers and with water, we are dealing with 'waters' and with various Anglo linguistic communities. Water can be active or passive, it can be protected and preserved, or water can protect and preserve us. It can charm and inspire us, or fill us with awe, fear and foreboding. Following decades if not centuries of abuse and mismanagement, water is coming back with a vengeance.

The linguistic corpora findings derived from the COCA, the BNC and the Leipzig Wortschatz give a clear overview of the adjectives we associate with water, and what we do with it. In the same way, they show how we enjoy water and how it remains a source of joy and a useful means for cleaning, transporting, heating, as well as a powerful force of nature. The press helps

us form an impression as to Anglo attitudes to water, water management and mismanagement, and gives some insight into the ways cultural identity is shaped by a nation's relationship to water.

Water is associated with disasters by all the Anglo linguistic communities studied, but the Scottish and the Canadian sources seemed to stress the state apparatus and technology designed to avert or alleviate crisis and disaster. The Australian, the English, and the US press studied appeared to be somewhat stuck in disaster zone, ogling at Armageddon. This may be a passing phase, a necessary moment for taking stock before raising consciousness and taking action, or it may be an indication that perhaps less densely populated nations, be they Finland, Scotland, Russia or Greenland, and Canada, may have developed policies, attitudes and cultures that are ultimately more water-friendly, or more hydrophilic, as the scientists would say. Is this merely wishful thinking? The articles studied so far at least, indicate that the Canadians' and the Scots' love of water gives them a more optimistic, pragmatic, future-friendly style. So perhaps 'hydrophilia' has a future. The Americans, the Australians, and the English may be 'going with the flow,' but for the moment, they are flowing downstream to a very different destiny, if we can trust our first impressions of this short study of their daily press.

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CO WODA ROBI Z NAMI?
ROZUMIENIE WODY W WIELOBIEGUNOWEJ
WSPÓLNOCIE ANGLOSASKIEJ

Streszczenie

Woda jest tak wszechobecna, tak niezbędna i tak nieunikniona, że uważa się ją za rzecz oczywistą. Pomimo że naukowcy wciąż odkrywają nowe fascynujące fakty o wodzie, jej składzie i formie, w powszechnym wyobrażeniu woda pozostaje podstawowym, 'prostym', 'elementarnym doświadczeniem'. Woda przyciąga nas i odpycha; wzbudza strach. Jakie są narracje o wodzie w języku angielskim? Jak ją rozumiemy? Celem artykułu jest całościowe i dokładne zbadanie różnorodnych, skomplikowanych i odmiennych sposobów rozumienia wody i relacji do niej przez 'społeczność anglojęzyczną', rozumianą jako zróżnicowana społeczność wielobiegunowa, żyjąca na całym świecie. Badanie „angielskiej wody” prowadzi od Szkocji po Australię, od Biblii po korpusy internetowe, od kanadyjskich uroczystości jezior do pożarów lasów w Kalifornii.

Słowa kluczowe: społeczność anglosaska; korpus; społeczność wielobiegunowa; woda; zasoby wody; wody.

WHAT WATER DOES WITH US?
UNDERSTANDING WATER IN A MULTIPOLAR ANGLO COMMUNITY

Summary

Water is so omnipresent, so vital, and so inescapable, it seems that we take it for granted. But while scientists are discovering exciting new things about water's composition and forms, in the popular imagination, water remains a primal, 'simple,' 'elemental experience.' Water attracts us and repels us; water inspires fear in us. What stories do we tell about water in English? How do we understand it? The object of the present paper is to gain an accurate overall impression of the diverse, complex and contradictory ways the 'Anglo community' – as a diverse multipolar community living around the world – understands waters and its relation to them. Exploring 'English waters' will take us from Scotland to Australia, from the Bible to online linguistic corpora, from Canadian celebrations of lakes and ravines to forest fires in California.

Keywords: Anglo community; corpus; multipolar community; water; water supply; waters.