

Learning English podcasts ... from the
Hellenic American Union©

Level: Advanced

Lesson: 40

Title: "Imperfect Escapes"

Summary:

Vanessa and reporter Michael Mathews discuss the ecological damage in Dubai.

In this episode of World Report Vanessa and Michael are in the middle of a live show in a radio studio. Michael is reporting live from the coast of Dubai in the Persian Gulf. Frederic Launay, director of WWF's office in Dubai, also joins them. Listen to their conversation and answer the question that follows about the main idea.

Dialogue:

Vanessa:

Our reporter, Michael Mathews is looking down on the world today while sipping on his coffee. And no, he's not in space. **Clueless?** Michael, over to you.



Michael:

Thanks Vanessa. 'The World' is a group of 300 man-made islands taking shape along Dubai's coastline. When the project is over and done with, they will look just like a map of the world from above.

Vanessa:

So the name's quite apt.

Michael:

I'll say.

Vanessa:

Are they for sale?



Michael:

For sale or for rent, they're being advertised as the perfect place for VIPs to escape to. They're expected to boost Dubai's already thriving tourism and will help them to prepare for when the low oil reserves in the region run out....



Vanessa:

But?

Michael:

The construction work is impacting on the local ecosystem.

Vanessa:

I thought that was coming...

Michael:

Frederic Launay, director of WWF's office in Dubai is with us to explain. Frederic, thanks for being with us. Now, there's a blaze of publicity surrounding the attractive aspect of these islands...

Frederic:

Well, exactly. **If only the media would focus on the less glamorous side.** These developments have taken a heavy toll on the local ecosystem. Just to give you an idea, the only known coral reef off the Dubai shores has been destroyed, and which has meant that sea turtle nesting sites have been eliminated.



Michael: Who's funding this project?

Frederic: State-owned property developer Nakheel. Despite our appeals, they only keep assuring us they'll use revolutionary techniques to stimulate coral growth.

Vanessa: Would that work?

Frederic: Possibly. **The media could help by raising awareness of the environmental issues, but as it is, I'm sorry to say, they aren't helping much.**

Vanessa: A massive project underway in Dubai, but what a high price to pay.



Now answer the following question...

What is the problem with the Dubai construction project?
It is damaging the local ecosystem.

Now listen again to the dialogue in parts. After each part there will be 3 to 4 questions on some details...

Part 1

Vanessa: Our reporter, Michael Mathews is looking down on the world today while sipping on his coffee. And no, he's not in space. **Clueless?** Michael, over to you.

Michael: Thanks Vanessa. 'The World' is a group of 300 man-made islands taking shape along Dubai's coastline. When the project is over and done with, they will look just like a map of the world from above.

Vanessa: So the name's quite apt.

Michael: **I'll say.**

Vanessa: Are they for sale?

Michael: For sale or for rent, they're being advertised as the perfect place for VIPs to escape to. They're expected to boost Dubai's already thriving tourism and will help them to prepare for when the low oil reserves in the region run out....

Vanessa: But?

Michael: The construction work is impacting on the local ecosystem.

Vanessa: **I thought that was coming...**

Now answer the following questions...

1. What does Vanessa mean when she says "**Clueless?**"

When Vanessa said "Clueless?" she means "Are you confused?"

2. What does Michael mean when he said "**I'll say**"?

When Michael said "I'll say" he wanted to agree with Vanessa that the name was apt.

3. What does Vanessa mean when she said "**I thought that was coming**"?

When Vanessa said "I thought that was coming", she meant she had guessed there was a negative side to the construction project.

Now listen again to the second part of the dialogue...

Part 2

Michael: Frederic Launay, director of WWF's office in Dubai is with us to explain. Frederic, thanks for being with us. Now, there's a blaze of publicity surrounding the attractive aspect of these islands...

Frederic: Well, exactly. **If only the media would focus on the less glamorous side.** These developments have taken a heavy toll on the local ecosystem. Just to give you an idea, the only known coral reef off the Dubai shores has been destroyed, and which has meant that sea turtle nesting sites have been eliminated.

Michael: Who's funding this project?

Frederic: State-owned property developer Nakheel. Despite our appeals, they only keep assuring us they'll use revolutionary techniques to stimulate coral growth.

Vanessa: Would that work?

Frederic: Possibly. **The media could help by raising awareness of the environmental issues, but as it is, I'm sorry to say, they are not helping much.**

Vanessa: A massive project underway in Dubai, but what a high price to pay.

Now answer the following questions...

1. What does Frederic mean by **"If only the media would focus on the less glamorous side"**?

When Frederic says "If only the media would focus on the less glamorous aspect", he wants to express his wish for the media to focus on the less glamorous aspect of the project.

2. What does Frederic mean by **"The media ... I'm sorry to say, are not helping much"**?

When Frederic says "The media... I'm sorry to say, are not helping much", he wants to express his disappointment that the media are not helping much.

Please visit our site at www.hau.gr to find the transcripts, explanations and activities.

GLOSSARY

Appeal: Commenting on the reaction on the part of the property developer Nakheel, Frederic Launay also said that despite WWF's **appeals**, all Nakheel has done is keep assuring them that they will use revolutionary techniques to stimulate coral growth. When a person or an organization **appeals** to the public – often on TV – for a certain person, they make an urgent request for something (e.g. money). Individuals or groups of people **make an appeal** for calm, for donations, etc.

Apt: Vanessa commented that the name of the island group ('the World') was quite **apt**, meaning that it was quite suitable or appropriate. If someone describes a name, a comment or a description as **apt**, they mean that the name, comment or description is appropriate in the circumstances -- it's **aptly** named or described.

Blaze of publicity: Michael pointed out that there's a **blaze of publicity** surrounding the attractive aspect of the World Islands. What he meant was that there's a great deal of attention given by the media to the attractive aspect of these islands. We sometimes describe the publicity surrounding something as **good**, or **bad**, or **adverse** (=bad or negative). A **blaze of publicity** is a lot of publicity.

Boost: You heard that the island construction project is expected to **boost** Dubai's tourism. This means that Dubai's tourism is expected to grow further. A government takes measures to **boost** exports, tourism, etc. or a corporation tries to **boost** sales, profits, etc. they try to improve or increase sales, profits, etc.

Impact on: Michael said that the construction work **is impacting on** the local ecosystem. This means that the project is affecting the local ecosystem. Human activity is often said to have a negative **impact** on the environment. A negative (or positive) **impact on** something is a negative (or positive) effect on something.

Over and done with: Michael said that when the project is **over and done with**, the group of islands along Dubai's coastline will look just like a map of the world. If something is **over and done with**, it's completely finished.

Take a heavy toll on: Frederic Launay said that the media were focusing on the glamorous aspect of this project, failing to mention that the construction developments **have taken a heavy toll on** the local ecosystem. A **toll** is money that a motorist has to pay in order to use a particular road or highway (a toll road). In a metaphorical sense, when someone talks about the **death toll** having reached 240, they refer to the number of casualties (dead and injured people). The expression **to take a heavy toll on** something means to damage something greatly. For example, working too hard can **take its toll** or **a heavy toll on** a person's health.

Thrive: Michael described Dubai's tourism as already **thriving**. If a business, a country's economy, its trade, or its tourism **thrives**, it flourishes, it prospers. If your garden **thrives**, the plants in it grow strong and healthy.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1

Fill in the blanks in the sentences using words and expressions from the glossary.

1. Ireland's economy _____ in the past fifteen years, going from strength to strength.
2. The hotel was _____ named The Blue Lagoon as it was built on a small lake.
3. When the project is _____, we can all go on vacation.
4. The illness has taken _____ on her health.
5. The thriving tourism has had a profound _____ on the area.
6. Any successful production can help an actor _____ her film career.
7. The Red Cross has launched an _____ to raise money for the inhabitants of the devastated region.
8. The two Hollywood stars got married in Paris in a _____ of publicity.

Activity 2

A. Consider the following explanations:

1. When Vanessa said '**Clueless?**', she wanted to know if Michael was confused. The expression '**I'm clueless**' means "I'm totally confused" / "I don't understand at all."
2. When we agree with something someone has just said, we say '**I'll say.**'
A: The name of the island group is quite apt.
B: **I'll say.**
3. If someone says something and we already guessed it was a fact, we say '**I thought that was coming.**'
A: The construction work is impacting on the local ecosystem.
B: **I thought that was coming.**
4. We use '**If only...**' and '**I wish...**' [+ past simple or would (not) do] to express our wish that something were different. The expression '**I'm sorry to say**' is used to express regret.
If only the media **would focus** on the less glamorous aspect.
I wish there **was** more awareness and action.

The media, **I'm sorry to say**, are not helping much.

B. Complete the conversations, giving an appropriate response. Use expressions from the explanations above.

1. A: The office is really crowded today.

B: _____

2. A: Do you have any idea why?

B: _____. I thought this was a regular working day.

3. A: Oh, I know! They must be planning a surprise party for Angela. She got a promotion.

B: Did she? _____

Activity 3

Complete the responses in the following conversation, using 'If only...', 'I wish...' and 'I'm sorry to say' in an appropriate way.

1. A: Motorists drive recklessly these days, don't they?

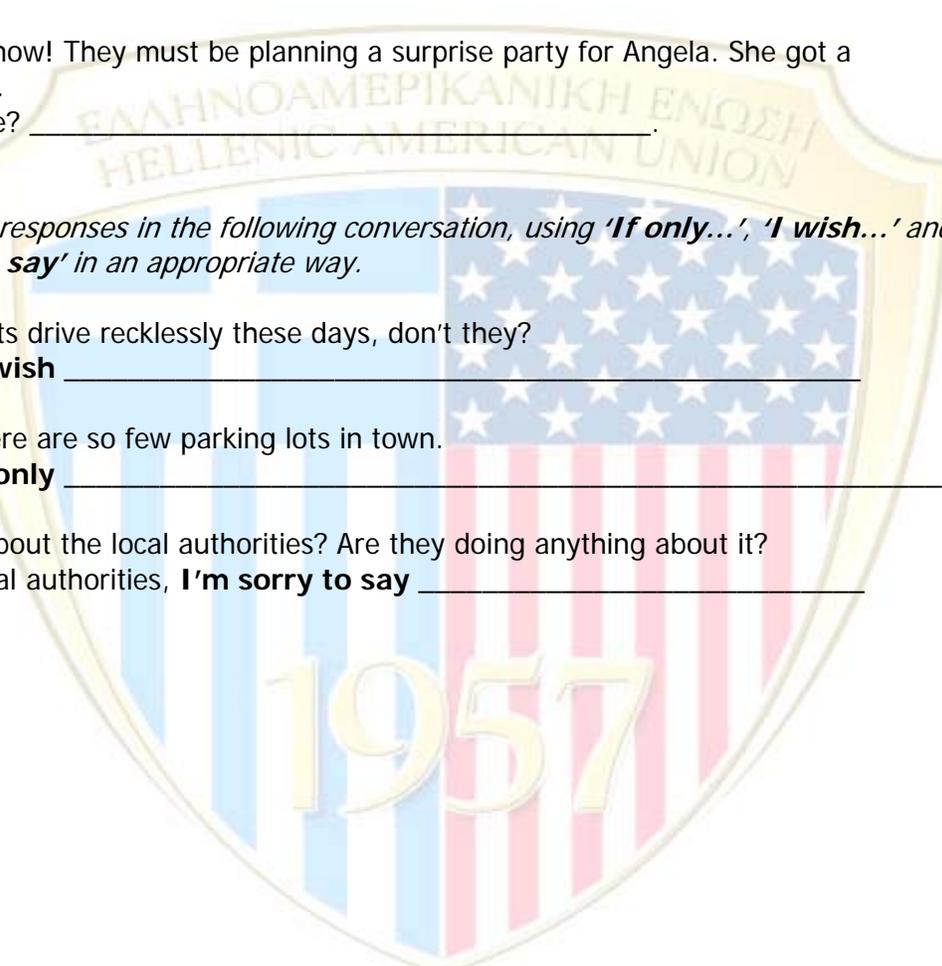
B: Yes, **I wish** _____

2. A: And there are so few parking lots in town.

B: Yes, **if only** _____

3. A: What about the local authorities? Are they doing anything about it?

B: The local authorities, **I'm sorry to say** _____



KEY TO THE ACTIVITIES

Activity 1

1. has thrived
2. aptly
3. over and done with
4. a heavy toll
5. impact
6. boost
7. appeal
8. blaze

Activity 2B

1. I'll say.
2. I'm clueless.
3. I thought that was coming.

Activity 3 (possible answers)

1. **I wish** they would drive more carefully.
2. **If only** there were more parking lots.
3. The local authorities, **I'm sorry to say**, aren't doing enough about it.

