

An example of agency in practice: HiGA IDU December 2021

Agency concerns turning ideas into practices that make a difference.

In December, 2021, the grade 9 (who are now grade 10) studied *ecolinguistics*¹ in an interdisciplinary unit (IDU) using both Japanese and English to read, write and listen to various texts. These included haiku and Miyazaki's animation 'Tonari no Totoro', both in its original form and in translation.

Students experienced, discussed and reflected upon issues around the translation of culturally embedded assumptions, values and ideas, thus raising their awareness of the power of language in creating reality but consequently also in being able to change it. Many of the discussions centred around different cultural views of the natural world, human relationships towards it, and how these impact our actions. It is hoped the work will help students make conscious responsible choices towards sustainable living from now on.

Several teachers were involved in the IDU and decided to write an academic paper about it for the *Japanese Association of Research into IB Education (JARIBE)* peer-reviewed journal. This has an audience across the IB community in Japan as well as in Korea and Taiwan.

Following the acceptance of the paper for publication, two teachers submitted a proposal reporting on the Ecolinguistics IDU for an online conference hosted by Riphah University in Islamabad, Pakistan. The proposal was accepted and Graeme Gilmour gave a presentation to an audience of hundreds of specialists from diverse fields in a range of countries including Brazil, Malaysia, Zimbabwe, the Phillipines, UK, and of course, Pakistan. The conference was recorded and is available on YouTube. Additionally, it was reported in the Pakistani press and on television.

Professor Arran Stibbe, of the University of Gloucestershire in the UK, is a leading expert in the field of ecolinguistics and has shown interest and support for the HiGA study. He requested a written report about the students' work for his research project.

The global reach of this local unit of study was presented to the students at the beginning of their grade 10 as an example of their agency in co-creating a network of communication that can bring about awareness and change.



¹ Ecolinguistics is the study of how values about the natural world of ecosystems are expressed in language