

千里国際学園 中等部・高等部

シリーズ「世界は千里でひとつになる The World Comes Together in Senri」 第14回
SIS : A Bilingual Environment SIS のバイリンガル環境
 SIS & OIS English teacher / Catherine Brown

SIS : A Bilingual Environment

What does it mean to spend your school days in a bilingual environment? On a warm summer afternoon I have the pleasure of speaking with two grade 11 SIS students, Haruka and Jun, to find out their thoughts on the matter.



Jun

First of all, I ask them when they use two languages in their school day.

Jun considers the question, grins, and reels off quite a list for me: "We use English and Japanese in loads of situations. We're both in the student council which is run in two languages. We have a really nice system which is that student council members speak in whichever language they prefer to use. Then if someone doesn't understand what's been said there's a translator. Then we also have two languages used in student congress, clubs, PE classes, school announcements, assemblies (with OIS) and finally, in my case, homeroom - because my homeroom teacher is American." Haruka thinks for a minute and adds Music, "Because our American Music teacher teaches us Japanese songs. But mostly, Music, Art, and English classes are conducted in English only."

I imagine that it must be a challenge, to spend the day operating in two languages.

Haruka disagrees. "For me it feels quite natural to switch between languages. In this environment both OIS and SIS students are expected to try to understand at least a bit of each language, so I think we all start to feel quite comfortable, really." Jun concurs, although he says, "Sometimes it is challenging. My second language is actually French. So because English is my third language I tend to think in Japanese and mentally translate into English before I speak. It's tough but making the effort is the norm here."

So, what skills do these two students think they are developing by being in a bilingual environment?

Haruka tells me it's not quite that simple: "It's not just a case of being in a bilingual environment. It's actually a multilingual, multicultural environment. We're using English and Japanese every day with both Japanese and expatriate schoolmates and teachers; so essentially we're constantly interacting with people from many different cultural and linguistic backgrounds." I re-phrase my question. Haruka

laughs. "Ok, so in this intercultural environment, I'd say that above all I'm learning how to give and take. It's an ongoing lesson in diplomacy." Jun puts it differently: "Every day I'm considering how to see things from multiple view points. Actually, I can't think of any other skill that is more important for the 21st Century."

I wonder if Haruka and Jun think SIS is unique because of the bilingual environment it provides.

Haruka reflects for a minute. "My brother attends a different high school which also has a high proportion of returnees. A couple of weeks ago we were out shopping together and I bumped into some friends from SIS. We chatted for a while in English. Later when my brother told me he was astounded, we discussed the difference between SIS and other schools.

We felt that, for my brother, English is an academic subject. For me, it's a living thing."

I ask Jun if he can add to that.

He demonstrates preparing layers of pizza as he speaks: "It's like a pizza. In SIS and OIS, Japan is the base; then English and other languages are the paste that bind us together. On top of that we have a colorful sprinkling of individual toppings. And Senri is the cheese melting over us!" Yum.



キャサリン・ブラウン

英語科 教員

千里国際学園 (SIS)

大阪インターナショナルスクール (OIS)

She studied English and American Literature at Warwick University in the UK. She obtained her postgraduate teaching certification at Leicester University and has a Masters in Japanese Studies from the University of Sheffield. Most recently Catherine has been teaching at a high school in Sydney, Australia. In her free time she enjoys travel and reading.

イギリスのワーウィック大学で英米文学を専攻。レスター大学大学院で教員免許、シェフィールド大で日本学の修士号を取得。オーストラリアの高校でも教鞭をとった。趣味は旅行と読書。