

## **Why Literature? Translating Literature in an Advanced Japanese Language Classroom**

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### **Abstract**

Literature is not often a part of Japanese language instruction. Scarcely mentioned in discussions of Japanese teaching framework, literature is viewed as neither closely related to nor effective for practical communication, and too difficult for all but the most advanced in reading and comprehension. Then why bring literature into the classroom at all? With collaboration between literature and language faculty, we explore this question through consideration of a course that incorporates translation as both a process and a goal. The course segment tackles Kawabata Yasunari's *Izu no odoriko* and two different English translations. By comparing the original to the translations and sharing analysis and interpretations, I show how students learn to read a primary text in Japanese and to understand the changing nature of language depending on its context. Instead of finding a correct answer, this method inspires students to develop their language skills by continued questioning.

### **Bio**

Miho Matsugu is an independent scholar and translator. She holds a PhD in East Asian Languages and Civilizations from the University of Chicago and taught Japanese language and literature at Grinnell College and DePaul University. With Nobuko Chikamatsu, she has worked on projects including "Bridging Japanese Language and Japanese Studies in Higher Education" (Occasional Papers, Association of Teachers of Japanese, no. 9, Fall 2009).