Translation used to be a bad word in language teaching, but that attitude is slowly changing as educators realize anew the value of learning the target language and culture through contrasting it with the learner’s own. One sign of this change is the publication in 2011 of *The Routledge Course in Japanese Translation*, by Yoko Hasegawa; another is the appearance of courses in Japanese translation at a number of leading American universities. However, interpreting, as a subfield of translation, has yet to meet with equal recognition. This presentation argues that interpreting can be a very useful and effective tool in teaching the target language and culture, while increasing students’ confidence as speakers of the foreign language.

In order to reach intercultural competence, it is necessary to fully understand the great diversity in codes and symbols – linguistic and otherwise – between different cultures. This presentation shows the benefits of teaching translation and interpretation to intermediate high and advanced speakers of Japanese. While the examples are drawn from a class devoted entirely to translation and interpreting, the presenter argues that the same methods can be used in regular language classes in the form of exercises aimed to facilitate cultural learning. Putting students “on the spot” as interpreters creates a situation in which they cannot avoid expressing meaning that might ordinarily seem too complex; the responsibility of their role means that they are thus forced to improvise, elicit information, use paraphrase, etc. The overall result is that they become more adventurous language learners.

The presentation will describe several types of exercises aimed at pinpointing cultural differences and raising students’ sensitivity to the necessity of addressing them properly. Examples will be given of how students learn to disentangle meanings of expressions, behaviors, and linguistic codes in a given context for a communicative purpose, while improving their language proficiency, enriching vocabulary, and learning how to seek out information and/or realize their own mistakes. They learn to move seamlessly between the two cultures by filtering information through a cultural lens in order to transmit meaning, not words.