

Defining Celebrity Translators: The prominent Status of Japanese Translators

Keywords: Celebrity translators, Visibility, Haruki Murakami

This paper aims to define translator celebrity in the Japanese context. It will ask what factors qualify Japanese translators to be regarded as celebrities. The paper demonstrates the factors that form the celebrity status of Japanese translators Yukiko Konosu, who has over 6000 followers on twitter; Takayoshi Ogawa, who is renowned for his novel interpretations; Takashi Nozaki, whose works are regarded as canonical; and the world-renowned novelist Haruki Murakami, whose translations are as popular as his novels. Furthermore, it will compare their various activities beyond translation practices, in order to illustrate their differing degrees and forms of prominence, depending on the range of factors that constitute their fame.

The mainstream discussion of translators' status in translation studies rarely focuses on cases of prominent translators. Instead, the low visibility and esteem of many translators, especially in European and North American contexts, has been the major topic of focus. However, in certain contexts, such as Japan, China, Israel, and even in some European cases, there are translators with considerable degrees of prominence, who can be described as celebrities.

Translator prominence is frequently attained by self-promoting artistic personae, emphasising the superiority of their position as cultural educators, and the popularity of the original authors in contexts such as China and Israel. However, in contemporary Japan, translator prominence is not attained by these factors, but by the popularity of the works translated; the entertainment value of the translations; their fluency; the level of interaction between the readership and translators; and translators' other activities apart from translation.

This paper will posit the hypothesis that the greater the number of aspects that combine to form a particular individual's celebrity, the higher the level of prominence they are likely to achieve.

Key Bibliography

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