

the Future

Japanese literature translated into Russian. From the top left: The Anthology of Myriad Leaves; The Tale of Genji; Collection of works by Bashō Matsuo; Collection of works by Sōseki Natsume; Rashōmon and other stories by Ryunosuke Akutagawa; Snow Country by Yasunari Kawabata; Confessions of a Mask by Yukio Mishima; Collection of works by Kōbō Abe; A Wild Sheep Chase by Haruki Murakami. Japanese and Russian researchers have been cooperating to translate modern and contemporary Japanese literature in the 21st century.



Left: Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) in Saint Petersburg, Russia. The study of Japan apparently started here in the early 18th century. Right: A part of the collection brought by Japanese castaways is stored in this Museum. It is said that the fan on the right was offered to Catherine II by Daikokuya Kōdayū, a Japanese castaway in the late Edo period.



文学を通じて
近くて遠い人々ともつながることで、
互いの理解をめざして
対話への道をひらきたい。

My aim is to improve the mutual understanding among different cultures, paving the way for a multicultural dialogue by connecting people from distant places through literature.

2 I would like my studies on comparative literature, which started with an admiration for overseas countries, to serve as a trigger to create a world history of literature.

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After graduating from the Department of Russian Language in the School of Foreign Languages at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Professor Mizobuchi cleared all the credits for Ph. D at the department of Regional Culture of the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. She has a PhD in literature. She was appointed to her current position in 2018, after working as an associate professor in the Faculty of Letters at Kumamoto University, and as an associate professor in the Graduate School of Letters at Hiroshima University. Her speciality is comparative literature and, by focusing on the relationship between Japan and Russia, she researched about several issues from a comparative perspective, going beyond concepts such as language or culture. She aims to conduct her research to assess literature as a system, paying attention to some aspects such as the representation of different cultures or translated literature.

Comparative literature is the study of figuring out what literature really is and understanding literature itself, going beyond multiple regions, languages and culture. I have been studying about mutual literary relationships between modern Japan and Russia, including the era of the Soviet Union, as well as translation and representation of different cultures. In comparative literature, it is not enough to simply pick up two countries or regions for comparison. For instance, Japanese and Russian literature, which are my specialties, cannot be fully understood without considering influences from other countries. When studying literature in the era of the Soviet Union, the existence of the U.S. cannot be dismissed. Thus, it is also necessary to pursue the relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, as well as the relationship between Japan and the U.S. In this sense, the number of countries and regions to consider increases along with the progress of the study. Such expansion is often seen in comparative literature.

My interest in Russia began when I saw a performance of the Bolshoi Ballet in my childhood. Considering what newspapers and TV news usually reported about Russia at that

time, I did not have a very positive image of the country. However, the gorgeous stage of the ballet company I saw from such country totally fascinated me. After that, when I picked up some children's books from this country, I found a completely different world full of exotic illustrations that combined both, an European and an Asian style, enchanting stories, and interesting sounds I had never heard before. Familiarizing myself with various Russian literary works, I began to feel like I would like to read those works in their original form, and here is the reason why I decided to study Russian literature at university. And of course, I am still studying it. Comparative Literature, while placing importance on the diversity of literature itself, it also emphasizes its universality. Looking at particular characteristics of literature in different regions and languages, I realized it is also the study of understanding the mechanism on how humans create literature, which is something universal beyond regions and languages. Because of it, I feel there is a limit when working on my own and this is the reason why it is essential to create networks and collaborative projects with other researchers. When you think of literary research, you may imagine

researchers working alone. However, researchers of comparative literature often interact with other people and engage in study groups. The field of compared literature was established in the 19th century, but I think we can say it is still new. For example, along with the influence of globalization after the 1990s, the question of translation is drawing attention again. It is a field that brings up new findings and redefines conventional ideas, showing us exciting developments. Because of that we can say it is old and new. Under such circumstances, a major project to create a history of literature is underway. I still wonder what kind of literatures we can find in the world, and how people created them. If we look at the history of literature as if it is a piece of fabric woven formed by much literature, it would be really exciting to consider my research as a colorful thread of it. Even novels or books you have already read in your younger days will provide you new findings that you had not noticed the first time. We find the meaning of life through literature, as well as we understand literature through life experience. I do believe it is my lifetime's work to share such deep experiences with many other people.