

## CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR IN JAPANESE IDIOM WITH THE WORD *MIZU* 'WATER'

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### Abstract

In Japanese, idioms are widely used to express feelings, ideas, and opinions. Idioms have a metaphorical meaning that contains the concept of Japanese people's thinking about something. This research examines the idiomatic forms of the word *mizu* based on the structure in Japanese. The research approach is qualitative. The research data are idioms which contain the word *mizu* with the *kanji* 「水」 which sources from the Japanese idiom dictionary, the book 101 Japanese Idioms and online dictionaries. The analysis stage is to categorize idioms based on conceptual metaphor theory. Then, identify the metaphorical meaning by comparing the lexical meaning using a dictionary. Next, categorize and analyze the types of metaphors. Then, identify the image scheme that underlies the concept of water and interpret the concept of *mizu* in a conceptual metaphor. Finally, categorize the idioms contained in the data based on the classification of idiom forms. The results showed that based on structure, there were three classifications of the idiom form of the word *mizu* which consisted of 4 noun, 2 adjective, and 4 verb idioms. This means that the dominant idiom is closely related to everyday experience because most of the memory of human cognition is obtained from water as a source of life which shows that the *mizu* 'water' metaphor is dominant in the work and efforts of Japanese people who are known as hard workers.

**Keywords:** *Conceptual metaphor, idioms, mizu 'water', japanese culture*

### SARI

Dalam bahasa Jepang, idiom banyak digunakan dalam mengungkapkan perasaan, gagasan, dan pendapat. Idiom memiliki makna metaforis yang berisi konsep berpikir

masyarakat Jepang tentang sesuatu. Penelitian ini mengkaji bentuk-bentuk idiom dari kata *mizu* 'air' berdasarkan struktur dalam bahasa Jepang. penelitian ini merupakan Pendekatan penelitian adalah kualitatif. Data adalah idiom yang di dalamnya terdapat kata *mizu* dengan *kanji* 「水」 yang bersumber dari kamus idiom Jepang, buku *101 Japanese Idioms* dan kamus daring. Tahap analisis yang dilakukan adalah mengategorikan idiom berdasarkan teori metafora konseptual. Lalu, mengidentifikasi makna metaforis dengan cara membandingkan makna leksikal menggunakan kamus. Selanjutnya, mengategorikan dan menganalisis jenis metafora. Lalu, mengidentifikasi skema citra yang mendasari konsep air dan memaknai konsep *mizu* 'air' dalam metafora konseptual. Terakhir, mengategorikan idiom yang terdapat pada data berdasarkan klasifikasi bentuk idiom. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa berdasarkan strukturnya, terdapat tiga klasifikasi bentuk idiom kata *mizu* yang terdiri dari 4 idiom nomina, 2 idiom adjektiva, dan 4 idiom verba. Hal ini berarti Idiom yang mendominasi erat kaitannya dengan pengalaman sehari-hari karena sebagian besar memori kognisi manusia didapat dari air sebagai sumber kehidupan yang menunjukkan bahwa metafora *mizu* 'air' dominan pada pekerjaan dan usaha orang-orang Jepang yang dikenal sebagai pekerja keras.

**Kata kunci:** *Metafora konseptual, Idiom, Mizu 'air', Budaya jepang*

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## Introduction

Japan in its communication culture belongs to a society with high context culture, namely countries that have the concept of indirect communication (implicit) such as Arabic and Spanish. This is different from low-context communication cultures which have direct (explicit) communication concepts such as American English, German, Swiss and so on. (Ratna, 2019, p. 22). Therefore, there are various ways or styles that are useful for creating a variation in language and are also useful for conveying things implicitly with the aim of softening, emphasizing, or giving the impression of being convoluted from the speaker to the interlocutor, one of them with idioms. For example, there are the following sentences:

ですからそれはもう忘れましょうよ。

*Desukara, /sore /wa/mou/ wasuremashou/ yo.*

'Therefore, let's just forget about it'.

昔のことは水に流してまたやり直いしましょうよ  
*Mukashino/koto/wa/mizu/ni/nagashite/ mata/ yari/ naoshimashou/ yo.*  
'The past let it flow (in the water), and let's start again'.

In the sentence above there is an idiom *mizu ni nagasu* (水に流す) which means lexically 'to drift into the water.' However, the idiomatic meaning of this expression is 'to give up or forget.' The idiom is used in conversation as a variation in language to convey things implicitly with the aim of giving the impression of being polite. It is said to give a polite impression because the topic being discussed involves the feelings of the other person so that if you use an explicit statement, it is feared that the other person will feel offended. Japanese culture comes from the elements *mi* (身) which symbolizes life (*inochi*) and *zu* which symbolizes connecting (繋げる/*tsunageru*), so *mizu* expresses something connected in life, which in the sentence above means something that must be forgotten in the present.

In this case, conceptual metaphor theory ((Lakoff, G. and Johnson, 1980) is used to determine the classification of metaphors and the origin of the source realm of the metaphorical words/phrases contained in sentences with the word *mizu* idiom. The basic idea is that metaphor is essentially a relation between conceptual domains, whereby ways of talking about one domain (the source domain) can be applied to another domain (the target domain) by of correspondences, or mappings between the two. Typically, the source domain relatively familiar and conceptually well-structured, and the structures are used to articulate the target domain. In the case of well-established metaphors, the correspondences are held to be permanently laid down in the cognitive system.

In the point of view of conceptual metaphors, the components of metaphor building are based on their constituent structures. The structure that forms the metaphor cannot be separated from the relationship between the source and target domains. This structure forms a metaphorical expression with a certain meaning. Meanwhile, metaphor is the level contained in metaphorical utterance. These levels appear based on the proximity of the source and target domains. The source domain consists of a set of entities, attributes, or processes that are literally and semantically linked in the mind. The target domain tends to be more abstract and follows the structure of the source domain through

ontological mapping (Hartanto, 2018). In the idiom *mizu ga aku*, the word *mizu* 'water' is the source, and *aku* 'opened' is the target.

Many conceptual metaphor research has been done. One of them is Nasoichah's research (2019) which examines idioms and metaphors in the song Jaran Goyang. Munandar and Nur (2019) discuss the conceptual metaphor of disease in *Mediakom* magazine. Research on conceptual metaphors on Japanese idioms has been carried out by Santoso dan Riani (2019) which examines the meaning of idiom metaphors (*kanyouku*) in the eye element (*me*). Rachmawati (2019) who discusses the metaphor of hands in Japanese idioms. Siregar et. al (2021) who discuss using the theory of conceptual metaphor to understand utterance metaphorical in english version of surah An-Nisa. Several recent relevant studies show that studies on popular metaphors are carried out because the phenomenon is in line with the development of social life. Studying metaphors also explores the concept of people's thinking in time and space in which one language is used. Therefore, this research continues the previous research which discussed metaphors in Japanese idioms.

This research focuses on Japanese idioms that contain elements of the word *mizu* 'water'. Japanese society is known as a society with a culture that appreciates their love and sense of beauty for nature. Water as part of nature can give a feeling of calm and inner peace so that Japanese people really appreciate the beauty that comes from nature (Yanuarita, 2013, p. 185). This attitude can be reflected in Japanese idiom expressions.

Miharu (2002, p. 124) classifies idioms based on their structure and meaning. Based on their structure, idioms are divided into three, namely verb, adjective, and noun idioms. Verb idiom is idioms whose formation consists of nouns and verbs, for example *atama ga kuru* which has the lexical meaning of 'the head comes', while the idiomatic meaning is 'to be angry or annoying'. Idioms of this type are the most common idioms found, especially those with structure noun + *o* + verb. Some idiom meanings are limited by the passive form of the verb as in *ki o torareru* 'distracted', causative form for example *hana o motaseru* 'give awards', and negative form as in *udatsu ga agaranai* 'can't go forward'. Some Japanese verb idioms are absolute idioms and cannot be changed to

other forms. There are also Japanese idioms that can change the form of the verb. These changes can be categorized into changes in words, forms of respect, passive or causative forms, and forms of affirmation or rejection.

Adjective idiom is idioms whose constituent elements consist of nouns and adjectives, for example, *kuchi ga karui* has the lexical meaning of 'light mouth, while the idiomatic meaning is 'speaking without thinking first'. Nominal idiom is idioms whose formation consists of a noun and a noun, for example, *uri futatsu* has the lexical meaning of 'two melons', while the idiomatic meaning is 'similar' or 'twin'.

It is realized that it is important to conduct research on metaphors in Japanese idioms that contain the word *mizu*. Therefore, the formulation of the problem that is relevant to the direction of the research topic is determined, namely whether the idiomatic forms of the word *mizu* 'water' are based on the structure in Japanese. This problem formulation is intended to look at idioms in Japanese that use the word *mizu* 'water' element. This means to know the concept of thinking of Japanese people related to water.

### **Methods**

Qualitative research approach was used in this research to describe the idiomatic form of the word *mizu* 'water' based on its structure in Japanese. Driven in Lakoff & Johnson (1980), word *mizu* with the kanji 「水」 were collected and analyzed. The data obtained are sentences that use idioms with the word *mizu*. Idiom data in sentences is divided based on its form and meaning. Sources of data come from written documents, namely the Japanese idiom dictionary *Pocketto Han Kanyouku/Kouji Kotowaza Jiten* (Utaguchi, 2014), and the book *101 Japanese Idioms* (Maynard & Maynard, 1994). These three data sources were chosen because they represent the standard sources for the use of idioms in communication that are commonly used by Japanese people.

The analysis stage carried out in this research is first, categorize idioms based on the concept of *mizu* 'water' based on conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff, G. and Johnson, 1980). Second, identify the metaphorical meaning of *mizu* 'water' by comparing it with the lexical meaning using a dictionary. Third, categorize and analyze the types of

metaphors based on the division of metaphors and analysis of conceptual metaphors. Fourth, identify the image scheme that underlies the concept of water and interpret the concept of *mizu* 'water' in a conceptual metaphor. Finally, categorize the idiom forms contained in the data based on the classification of idiomatic forms (Miharu, 2002).

## Result and Discussion

The results in this research show the idiomatic form of the word *mizu* based on its constituent structure. From its structure, idioms with the word *mizu* consist of noun, adjective and verb idioms. Determination is done by looking at the combination of the constituent elements. The results are presented in the following table:

Tabel 1. Idiom Form of the Word Mizu Based on Idiom Noun

No.	Idiom	Romaji (Latin)	Lexical Translation	Idiom Based on Structure	Forms on
1.	年寄りの冷や水	<i>Toshiyori no hiyamizu</i>	Parent's cold water	Noun Idiom	
2.	寝耳に水	<i>Nemimi ni mizu</i>	Water enters our sleeping ears	Noun Idiom	
3.	水の流れと身のゆくえ	<i>Mizu no nagare to mi no yukue</i>	The flow of water and its existence	Noun Idiom	
4.	水と油	<i>mizu to abura</i>	Water and oil	Noun Idiom	

Furthermore, the idiom form of the word *mizu* is based on the idiom adjective. Idiom forms of the word *mizu* based on the idiom adjectives are presented in the following table.

Tabel 2. Idiom Forms of *Mizu* Words Based on Idiom Adjective

No.	Idiom	Romaji (Latin)	Lexical Translation	Idiom Based on Structure	Forms
5.	水温む	<i>Mizu nurumu</i>	Warm water	Adjective Idiom	
6.	水が合わない	<i>Mizu ga awanai</i>	Water not suitable	Idiom Adjective	

Furthermore, the idiom form of the word *mizu* is based on the verb idiom. The idiom form of the word *mizu* based on the verb idiom is presented in the following table.

Tabel 3. Idiom Forms of the Word *Mizu* Based on Verb Idiom

No.	Idiom	Romaji (Latin)	Lexical Translation	Idiom Forms Based on Structure
7.	湯水のように使う	<i>Yumizu no yōnitsukau</i>	Use like hot water	Verb Idiom
8.	上手の手から水が漏れる	<i>Jōzunote kara mizu ga moreru</i>	Water comes out of fingers	Verb Idiom
9.	呼び水になる	<i>Yobimizu ni naru</i>	Become a water pump	Verb Idiom
10.	汗水流す	<i>Asemizu nagasu</i>	Flowing sweat	Verb Idiom

### Idiom Forms Based on the Structure of the Word *Mizu* 'Water'

In the discussion of this section, the idiomatic form of the word *mizu* based on its structure is discussed. In the perspective of Miharu (2002) which explains that noun idioms are idioms formed based on the pattern of noun + noun grammatical categories. Adjective idioms are idioms that are formed based on the noun + adjective pattern. Verb idioms are idioms formed based on the noun + verb pattern.

### Idiom Form of the Word *Mizu* Based on Noun Idiom

The following is a review of some of the data found related to the form of noun idioms:

- (1) 年寄り の 冷や水  
*Toshiyori no hiyamizu*  
 Parents has cold water  
 N Part N  
 'Dangerous/unsuitable for the elderly'

In data (1), this idiom is a noun idiom because the structural pattern is noun + noun. The particle *no* is used to describe the ownership function of “parental (owned) cold water.”

- (2) 寝耳 に 水  
*Nemimi ni mizu*  
 Sleeping ears in water  
 N Part N  
 'Got shocking news'

In data (2) this idiom is a nominal idiom because the structural pattern is noun + noun. The particle *ni* is used to describe the function of the preposition 'in.'

- (3) 水の流れ と 身のゆくえ  
*Mizu no nagare to mi no yukue*  
 Water flow and human existence  
 NP Part NP  
 'Live life like flowing water'

As for data (3), this idiom is formed by combining words that form a phrase, but the phrase formed is a noun phrase (NP), so it is still a nominal idiom. The particle *to* is used with the function of balancing two nouns so that it means 'and.'

- (4) 水 と 油  
*Mizu to abura*  
 Water and oil  
 N Part N  
 'Water and oil'

In data (4) this idiom is a noun idiom because the structural pattern is noun + noun. The particle *to* is used with the function of balancing two nouns. So, that it means 'and.'

### Idiom Forms of Word *Mizu* Words Based on Adjective Idiom

The following is a review of some of the data found related to verb idiom:

- (5) 水 温む  
*Mizu nurumu*  
 Water warm  
 N N  
 'Warmth'

In data (3) this idiom is an adjective idiom because the structural pattern is noun + noun.

- (6) 水 が 合わない  
*Mizu ga awanai*  
 Water not suitable  
 N part VP  
 'Environment not suitable'

In data (6) this idiom is a verb idiom because the structural pattern is noun + verb. The particle *ga* is used to describe the condition/state of water.

### Idiom Forms of the Word *Mizu* Based on Verb Idiom

The following is a review of some of the data found related to Verb idiom:

- (7) 湯水 の ように使う  
*yumizu no yō ni tsukau*  
 Hot water use like  
 N part VP  
 'Wasting money/stuff'



*Mizu* is nature and the environment where humans live, precisely being the source of life for living things in nature, showing that the *mizu* metaphor 'water' is dominant in work and business where Japanese people are known as hard workers as in the example of the metaphor "*asemizu nagasu*", "*mizu ga hairu*", "*yobimizu ni naru*." This article claims that idiomatic forms based on structure in Japanese allow us to see connections between metaphoric expressions and relevant discourse and to recognize the patterns of variation that attend figurative expressions.

### **Conclusion**

This research that discusses metaphors in idioms with the word *mizu* in Japanese concludes that the idiom form of the word *mizu* in Japanese consists of noun, adjective, and verb idioms. From the analysis of the data, it is known that based on its structure, there are 4 noun idioms, 2 adjective idioms, and 4 verb idioms. Overall, the dominant idiom is closely related to everyday experience because most of the memory of human cognition is obtained from water as a source of life. The idiom of the word *mizu* 'water' is a substance that can function in a sensed environment. *Mizu* is nature and the environment where humans live, precisely being the source of life for living things in nature which shows that the *mizu* metaphor of 'water' is dominant in the work and efforts of Japanese people who are known as hard workers.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

No potential conflict of interest was reported.

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