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

**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:

すされましたgunairemashōyo.
*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/itsunageru), 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 \textit{mizu ga aku}, the word \textit{mizu} 'water' is the source, and \textit{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 (\textit{kanyouku}) in the eye element (\textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{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 + \textit{o} + verb. Some idiom meanings are limited by the passive form of the verb as in \textit{ki o torareru} 'distracted’, causative form for example \textit{hana o motaseru} ‘give awards’, and negative form as in \textit{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 *Poketto 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:

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

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<th>Romaji (Latin)</th>
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<th>Idiom Forms Based on Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>水温む</td>
<td>Mizu nurumu</td>
<td>Warm water</td>
<td>Adjective Idiom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>水が合わない</td>
<td>Mizu ga awanai</td>
<td>Water not suitable</td>
<td>Idiom Adjective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

**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
   '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
   '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.'
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.'

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:

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

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:
In data (7) this idiom is formed with a combination of nouns and words that form a phrase, but the phrase formed is a verb phrase (VP) as a determining phrase, so it is still a verbal idiom. The particle *no* is used to describe the proprietary function of hot water.

(8) 上手の手から水が漏れる

\[ Jōzu no te kara mizu ga moreru \]

Good hands from water out

NP part VP

'Even skilled ones can fail'

In data (8) this idiom is formed by combining words that form a phrase, but the phrase formed is a verb phrase (VP) as a determining phrase, so it is still a verb idiom. The particle *ga* is used to describe the condition/state of water.

(9) 呼び水になる

\[ Yobimizu ni naru \]

Water pump be

NP Part VP

'Being a trigger'

In data (9) this idiom is a verb idiom because the structural pattern is noun + verb. In this idiom phrase the particle *ni* is used to explain the sentence pattern *ni naru* 'be'.

(10) 汗水を流す

\[ Asemizu nagasu \]

Sweat water flow

N V

'Work hard'

In data (10) this idiom is a verb idiom because the structural pattern is noun + verb.

From a critical point of view, this research uses three forms of idioms, namely, noun idioms, adjective idioms, and verb idioms consisting of 4 noun idioms, 2 adjective idioms, and 4 verb idioms. Determination is done by analyzing the combination of its constituent elements. This linguistic phenomenon in the *mizu* (water) element shows how the cognition mechanism in processing language. The idiom that dominates is closely related to everyday experience because most of the memory of human cognition is obtained from water as a source of life. Fitriana (2019) which proves that the metaphor used in terms of conceptual similarities between the community and the fact that water is a substance that can function in an environment that can be felt. Distinctive features determine the use of a specific metaphorical expression (Oka and Kusumi, 2020).
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.

**References**


**Conflict of Interest**
No potential conflict of interest was reported.

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