

Research Article

The Meaning of Japanese Proverbs and Their Equivalents in Indonesian Language

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Abstract

Proverbs in Japanese are known as *Kotowaza*, which are defined as wise sayings or ancient proverbs that have many practical benefits. This study aims to examine the understanding of Japanese language students in Bandung city regarding the meaning of proverbs and their equivalents in Indonesian. The research method used is descriptive quantitative with the theory used for analysis is Ogden and Richard's triangle of meaning theory. This paper is expected to be an insight in understanding the meaning of proverbs. Although each word in these proverbs has a different meaning, when formed into a proverb in both Indonesian and Japanese, it will give rise to a new meaning that contains sarcasm, advice or simply reinforces the meaning of each utterance. The word elements used to form proverbs in Japanese and Indonesian are the same, but the meaning will be different depending on the culture of the people. The results of the analysis showed that out of 41 students of Japanese language study programs in Bandung, 29 students understood the meaning of some of the Japanese proverbs given, although the proverbs were not learned in their formal education. As for the Indonesian equivalents, each of these Japanese proverbs has two Indonesian equivalents.

Keywords: *Kotowaza*; Meaning; Proverb

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1. Introduction

Communication according to Effendy (in the thesis by Hawari (2016)) is the event of conveying human ideas. From this understanding, it can be concluded that communication is a process of delivering messages that can be in the form of information messages, ideas, emotions, skills and so on through symbols or symbols that can cause effects in the form of behavior carried out with certain media. Language can be defined as a set of symbols, with 17 rules for combining these symbols, which are used and understood by a community.

Language is never separated from humans, in the sense that there are no human activities that are not accompanied

by language. Language is an arbitrary system of sound symbols used by members of social groups to cooperate, communicate, and identify themselves (*Kridalaksana in (Chaer, 2012)*). In his study, Sudaryanto (1990) concluded that the basic function of language is the developer of reason and the maintenance of cooperation. Based on this opinion, it means that language is not just a means of communication. As an intellect, language can be used to express human thought patterns, thoughts, and feelings. Meanwhile, as a maintainer of cooperation, language can produce a harmonious life. So, where there is human life, there will also be language activities.

Proverbs in the Big Indonesian Dictionary (2005) are groups of words or sentences that are fixed in order, usually illustrating a certain meaning (in proverbs also include thimbles, expressions, parables), and are expressions or sentences that are concise, containing comparisons, parables, advice, principles of life or rules of behavior. Proverbs are also often used by the surrounding community, sometimes they do not realize that what they say is included in proverbs. Proverbs have types, namely, proverb, motto, parable, and thimble/pameo.

Not only in Indonesia, every country has its own proverbs but with different names. For example, in Japan, proverbs are called *kotowaza* (諺). Haruhiko in Dharmayanti (1999) says that '*kotowaza wa seken ni hiroku iinasawasarete kita kotoba de, kyookun ya fuushinado ofukunda chiku.*' Which means proverbs are sentences that are disseminated through customs in society which contain teaching, satire.

In Indonesia, proverbs are often used in daily life such as advising relatives who are in trouble, giving sarcasm to stubborn people, and so on. However, just like Indonesia, Japan also uses proverbs in the same way as Indonesia, they use proverbs as inserts in daily conversations such as giving advice and giving good teachings.

Based on the above description, the author is interested in further researching the understanding of Japanese language students in Bandung city towards the meaning of Japanese proverbs and how they are equivalent in Indonesian proverbs. As it is known that the learning of Japanese proverbs is not much done in formal education, generally Japanese learners are self-taught about Japanese proverbs. For this reason, there are many Japanese learners who do not recognize these Japanese proverbs. In addition, the declining use of proverbs in daily life is

another point that the author wants to raise in this research.

Proverbs described by Kridalaksana (2013) are parables that contain comparisons composed of an intention (something that is not expressed) and a comparison (something that is expressed). Japanese proverbs or *Kotowaza* are defined by Shinmura (1999) as:

“古くから人々に言いならわされたことば。教訓・風刺などの意を寓した短句や秀句。”

Furuku kara hitobito ni ii narawasareta kotoba. Kyoukun fuushi nado no I o guushita tanku ya shuuku.

‘Short sentences containing such as lessons and satire used by people since time immemorial. Short phrases and beautiful phrases that imply life lessons, morals, guidelines, and satire’.

Research on *kotowaza* was previously conducted by Faudul (2018) with the research title "a study of the meaning and cultural value of Japanese and Indonesian proverbs that use animal name elements". In his research, Faudul explained that there are three classifications in Japanese proverbs and Indonesian proverbs containing animal elements, including: (1) proverbs with animal name elements and the same meaning, (2) proverbs with different animal name elements but have the same meaning, and (3) proverbs with the same animal's name elements but have different or opposite meanings. In the first classification, nine similar meanings were found in both Japanese proverbs and Indonesian proverbs. Then five animal names were also found in the classification. The second classification found nineteen similar meanings. Twenty-one animal names were also found with the most common animal name being horse (馬 /uma). In the last classification, only one data was found in Japanese proverbs or Indonesian proverbs.

Another study was also conducted by Kharina (2016) with the research title "analysis of the meaning of kotowaza related to kanji season and its relevance to Japanese culture". In her research, Kharina explained that in Japanese proverbs related to the kanji of the season there are twenty proverbs. Then of the twenty proverbs there are twelve proverbs that have relevance to culture based on seasons. Japanese proverbs related to seasons are not limited to describing natural conditions but also describe an event or an implied advice. In addition, it discusses the relationship between the environment or culture based on the seasons that influences the formation of proverbs.

Based on the previous research described above, in this study the author focuses on Japanese proverbs or kotowaza that have the same proverbial meaning as Indonesian proverbs but use different word meanings. The author collected data from a questionnaire distributed to Japanese language students in Bandung which contained questions about Japanese proverbs that have the same proverbial meaning as proverbs in Indonesia. The previous study used dictionaries and websites as its data sources, while in this study the author used the results of a questionnaire that had been distributed to 41 students of Japanese language study programs in the city of Bandung.

The discussion of proverbs in this study refers to Ogden and Richards's theory which examines language signs from three sides, namely symbols, ideas, and references. The relationship of the sign elements is depicted in the form of a triangle with the lower side in the form of a dotted line. According to Ogden and Richards (1985), symbols represent ideas that exist in the mind. The idea in mind is the meaning of the language symbol. The idea refers to the referent. For example, in the Indonesian proverb "*Di luar bagai madu, di dalam bagai empedu*" In the above theory, the symbol in the proverb is

'a sweet taste with a bitter taste'. The meaning of honey and bile is the idea, which is 'two contrasting things, one sweet and the other bitter'. The idea refers to the actual corresponding object (thing), namely, honey, which is sweet and nutritious, and bile, which is an internal organ and tastes bitter. From the theoretical example above, the meaning of the proverb is "*perkataannya yang baik tidak sesuai dengan hatinya yang busuk*" (Center, 2020).

2. Methods

The type of research used in this study is quantitative descriptive research. According to Sugiyono (2017) the descriptive method is research that describes, describes, or describes the state of the object under study as it is, according to the situation and conditions when the research is carried out. This research also uses a quantitative approach. Quantitative research according to Kasiram (2010) is quantitative research is a process of finding knowledge that uses data in the form of numbers as a tool to analyze information about what you want to know. The same thing is also expressed by Sujarweni (2014) who explains quantitative research is a type of research that produces findings that can be achieved (obtained) using statistical procedures or other means of quantification (measurement). The descriptive quantitative research type was chosen because the author collected data objectively by distributing questionnaires to Japanese language students in the city of Bandung. From the questionnaires that have been distributed there are forty-one respondents who come from the Japanese language student association in the city of Bandung (seven students from Padjajaran University, twenty-three students from Widyatama University, and eleven students from Maranatha Christian University).

The data collection method used is the *cakap* method with the technique of *cakap tansemuka*, this was done by

distributing questionnaires from September 12, 2022 to September 15, 2022. The selection of the *cakap tansemuka* technique is because the data collection is carried out between the researcher and the data source does not face to face, but the respondent is asked to fill out a questionnaire distributed via googleform with the following link: <https://forms.gle/9vjDkCDXqczRgVo89>.

The data analysis method used is the intralingual pairing method, which is an analysis method by comparing lingual elements, both contained in one language and in several different languages (Mahsun, 2017). The stages of data analysis carried out are collecting Japanese proverbs, then processing the results of the questionnaire.

For the method of presenting the results of the analysis, the author uses formal and informal methods because the author uses tables, graphs, and also words in presenting the data. The formal presentation method as explained by Sudaryanto (2015) is a formulation with what is commonly known as signs and symbols. While the informal method is a formulation with ordinary words, although with technical terminology.

2.1. Semantics

Discussions about communication are the focus of semantics. Semantics in Japanese is called *imiron* (意味論), which is a branch of linguistics that studies meaning. For the object of study, semantics is divided into word meaning, meaning relations between one word and another, phrase meaning, and sentence meaning (Sutedi, 2011). Lehrer (1973) explains that semantics is the study of meaning. Verhaar (1983) also states that semantics means the theory of meaning or the theory of meaning. In other words, it can be concluded that semantics is a linguistic study that is closely related to meaning. Chaer (2013) explains that meaning has types or types that can be distinguished based on several criteria and points of view.

Based on the type of semantics, we can distinguish between lexical meaning and grammatical meaning, based on whether or not there is a referent in a word/lexeme, we can distinguish referential meaning and non-referential meaning, based on whether or not there is a sense value in a word/lexeme, we can distinguish denotative meaning and connotative meaning, based on the determination of meaning, we can distinguish between word meaning and term meaning or general meaning and special meaning. Then based on other criteria or other points of view, associative meaning, collocative meaning, reflective meaning, idiomatic meaning, and so on can be mentioned.

Meanwhile, according to Pateda (2001) there are twenty-nine types of meaning, namely affective meaning, denotative meaning, descriptive meaning, extension meaning, emotive meaning, gereflekter meaning, grammatical meaning, ideational meaning, intentional meaning, special meaning, figurative meaning, cognitive meaning, collocation meaning, conceptual meaning, construction meaning, contextual meaning, lexical meaning, locutionary meaning, broad meaning, pictorial meaning, propositional meaning, central meaning, referential meaning, narrow meaning, stylistic meaning, textual meaning, thematic meaning and general meaning.

3. Results and Discussion

In this discussion chapter, the author will present an analysis based on the results of the questionnaire from the respondents that the author has classified.

Based on the data in the table 1, it is known that the number of student respondents in the city of Bandung who filled out the questionnaire was on average 20 to 22 years old. With respondents aged 18 years there were two respondents. Then there are seven respondents aged 19 years. Respondents aged 20 years were six

respondents. Respondents aged 21 years were fourteen respondents. Respondents aged 22 years were eight respondents. Respondents aged 23 years were three respondents. There is one respondent who is 24 years old.

Table 1 Age of respondents

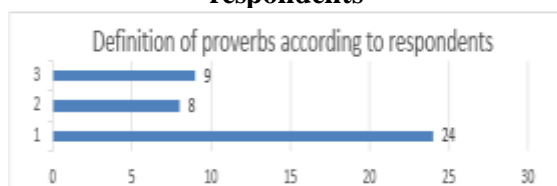
No.	Age	Total	Percentage
1.	18 years old	2 people	5%
2.	19 years old	7 people	17%
3.	20 years old	6 people	15%
4.	21 years old	14 people	34%
5.	22 years old	8 people	20%
6.	23 years old	3 people	7%
7.	24 years old	1 people	2%

Table 2 Gender of respondents

No.	Gender	Total	Percentage
1.	Male	21 people	51%
2.	Female	20 people	49%

Based on the data in the table 2, it is known that the number of student respondents in the city of Bandung who filled out the questionnaire was twenty men and twenty-one women.

Figure 1 Definition of proverbs according to respondents



Based on the data in Figure 1, it is known that the understanding of proverbs among students is divided into three groups, namely, (1) Sentences that have implied meanings. With a total of twenty-four respondents; (2) Ancient proverbs. With a total of eight respondents; and (3) Sentences with figures of speech or parables. With a total of nine respondents.

Based on the data in Figure 2, 56 percent of the respondents answered that it was normal, with twenty-three respondents, followed by respondents who answered that proverbs were important, with sixteen respondents. Then one respondent each

answered very important and not important. The reason for the respondents who answered ordinary was because proverbs are very rarely used by them in ordinary conversations. While respondents who answered important had various reasons, namely, it has something to do with the life that is being lived, it must be preserved as an art, it is useful when making a speech, and when advising someone it will not hurt too much if it is with proverbs.

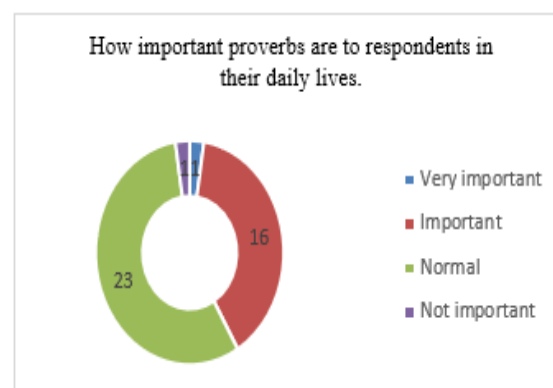


Figure 2 How important proverbs are to respondents

Table 3 Under what circumstances proverbs are usually used

No.	Circumstances	Total
1.	Satirize a friend	21 people
2.	Daily chat	11 people
3.	Advising a friend	32 people
4.	Speech	5 people

Based on the data in table 3, it can be seen that the respondents who used proverbs as satire were twenty-one respondents. Then thirty-two respondents used proverbs as advice to others. Furthermore, eleven respondents used proverbs in daily chats, and five respondents used proverbs when giving speeches in front of the public.

Next, the author presents the data from the questionnaire on the understanding of Japanese language students in Bandung city of the five Japanese proverbs that the author has given, which are, (1) "Iwanu ga Hana"; (2) "Ukishizumi nanado"; (3) "Suruga no Fuji to Ichirizuka"; (4) "Ayamachite

aramezaru kore o ayamachi to iu";
(5) "Kasegu ni oitsuku binbou nashi".

Table 4 Japanese proverbs 1

「言わぬが花。」

"Iwanu ga hana"

Respondent's answer	Total	Percentage (%)
Better not to talk	21 people	51 percent
Not everything that is said is beautiful	14 people	34 percent
Something important if not said will be in vain	6 people	15 percent

The table of Japanese proverbs above has the meaning 'silence is better'. Then respondents described the proverbial meanings of the proverbs as 1) it is better not to speak. With twenty-one respondents answering similarly, 2) not everything that is said is beautiful. With fourteen respondents who answered similarly; and 3) something important if not said will be in vain. With six respondents who answered similarly. Then from the respondents' correct answers regarding the proverbial meaning of the proverbs above are 1) it is better not to speak, and 2) not all things spoken are beautiful. It can be concluded that from all the answers, 85 percent of the respondents' answers refer to the same understanding that silence is better than action or speech.

Table 5 Indonesian equivalents

「言わぬが花。」

"Iwanu ga hana"

No.	Indonesian proverbs	Total	Percentage (%)
1.	<i>Diam adalah emas</i>	39 people	95 percent
2.	<i>Diam seribu bahasa</i>	2 people	5 percent

Based on the data in table 5, the proverb discussed is "Iwanu ga hana". Thirty-nine respondents answered that the proverb is the same as the Indonesian proverb '*diam adalah emas*'. While two respondents answered that the proverb is the

same as the Indonesian proverb '*diam seribu bahasa*'.

Table 6 Japanese proverbs 2

「浮き沈み七度。」

"Ukishizumi nanado"

Respondent's answer	Total	Percentage (%)
Life is full of twists and turns	22 people	54 percent
Life has sad and happy times	15 people	36 percent
Life is like a spinning wheel	4 people	10 percent

The table of Japanese proverbs above means 'Life has many ups and downs'. Then the respondents described the meaning of the proverbs as 1) life is full of twists and turns. With the number of respondents as many as twenty-two respondents; 2) life has sad and happy times. With a total of fifteen respondents, and 3) life is like a spinning wheel. With the number of respondents as many as four respondents. Then it can be concluded that from all the answers all respondents refer to the same understanding that in life there will be ups and downs, there will be difficult times and happy times.

Table 7 Indonesian equivalents

「浮き沈み七度。」

"Ukishizumi nanado"

No.	Indonesian proverbs	Total	Percentage (%)
1.	<i>Adat pasang berturun naik</i>	24 people	59 percent
2.	<i>Tak mengenal pasang surut</i>	17 people	41 percent

Based on the data in table 7, the proverb discussed is "Ukishizumi nanado" which means 'in life there will be many ups and downs', and twenty-four respondents answered that the proverb is the same as the Indonesian proverb '*adat pasang berturun naik*'. While seventeen respondents answered that the proverb is the same as the Indonesian proverb '*tak mengenal pasang surut*'.

Table 8 Japanese proverbs 3

「駿河の富士と一里塚。」

”*suruga no fuji to ichirizuka*”

Respondent's answer	Total	Percentage (%)
Above the sky there is still another sky	27 people	66 percent
A large comparison between two things	14 people	34 percent

The table of Japanese proverbs above has the meaning 'Do not compare something that is clearly different'. Then the respondents described the proverbial meaning of the proverb as 1) above the sky there is still sky. With a total of twenty-seven respondents; and 2) a big comparison between two things. With the number of respondents as many as fourteen respondents. Then from the respondents' correct answers regarding the proverbial meaning of the proverbs above is 2) a great comparison between two things. It can be concluded that 34 percent of the respondents' answers refer to the same understanding which is a big difference between one thing and another.

Table 9 Indonesian equivalents

「駿河の富士と一里塚。」

”*Suruga no fuji to ichirizuka*”

No.	Indonesian proverbs	Total	Percentage (%)
1.	<i>Bagai bumi dan langit</i> <i>Di atas</i>	14 people	34 percent
2.	<i>langit masih ada langit</i>	27 people	66 percent

Based on the data chart above, the proverb discussed is "*Suruga no fuji to ichirizuka*" whose proverbial meaning is 'do not compare something that is clearly different', and fourteen respondents answered that the proverb is the same as the Indonesian proverb '*bagai bumi dan langit*'. While twenty-seven respondents answered that the proverb is the same as the Indonesian proverb '*di atas langit masih ada langit*'.

Table 10 Japanese proverbs 4

「過ちて改めざる是を過ちと謂う。」

”*ayamachite aramezaru kore o ayamachi to iu*”

Respondent's answer	Total	Percentage (%)
A million good things will be covered with just one bad thing	4 people	10 percent
One must not only admit mistakes but also correct them	23 people	56 percent
The importance of reflection on mistakes	14 people	34 percent

The table of Japanese proverbs above means 'Humans often make mistakes. But not trying to change is the real mistake'. Then the respondents described the proverbial meanings of the proverbs including 1) a million good things will be covered by only one bad thing. With the number of respondents as many as 4 respondents; 2) one must not only admit mistakes but must correct them. With a total of 23 respondents; and 3) the importance of reflecting on mistakes. With a total of 14 respondents. Then from the respondents' answers that are correct and similar to the proverbial meaning of the proverbs above are 2) one must not only admit mistakes but must correct them. It can be concluded that from all the answers, 56 percent of the respondents' answers refer to the same understanding that when making a mistake, one must not only admit but also correct the mistake.

Table 11 Indonesian equivalents

「過ちて改めざる是を過ちと謂う。」

”*Ayamachite aramezaru kore o ayamachi to iu*”

No.	Indonesian proverbs	Total	Percentage (%)
1.	<i>Sepandai-pandainya tupai melompat, sekali waktu jatuh juga</i> <i>Gajah dipelupuk</i>	18 people	44 percent
2.	<i>mata tak tampak, semut di seberan lautan tampak</i>	23 people	56 percent

Based on table 11, the proverb discussed is "Ayamachite aramezaru kore o ayamachi to iu" which means 'humans often make mistakes, but not trying to change them is the real mistake', and eighteen respondents answered that the proverb is the same as the Indonesian proverb '*sepandai-pandai tupai melompat, sekali waktu jatuh juga*'. While twenty-three respondents answered that the proverb is the same as the Indonesian proverb '*gajah dipelupuk mata tidak tampak, semut di seberang laut tampak*'.

Table 12 Japanese proverbs 5

「稼ぐに追い付く貧乏なし。」
"kasegu ni oitsuku binbou nashi"

Respondent's answer	Total	Percentage (%)
Sustenance will follow one's efforts	13 people	32 percent
There's always a way to make money	16 people	39 percent
Nothing is impossible for the dreams that will be achieved	12 people	29 percent

The table of Japanese proverbs in Table 12 has the meaning 'There will be no poverty if you keep working hard'. Then the respondents described the meaning of the proverbs as 1) sustenance will follow one's efforts. With a total of thirteen respondents; 2) there is always a way to make money. With a total of sixteen respondents; and 3) nothing is impossible for dreams to be achieved. With a total of twelve respondents. Then from all respondents' answers all refer to the same understanding that with hard work, all our efforts will be paid off.

Based on the data in table 13, the proverb discussed is "Kasegu ni oitsuku binbou nashi" whose proverbial meaning is 'there will be no poverty if you continue to work hard', and as many as twenty respondents answered that the proverb is the same as the Indonesian proverb '*fajar menyingsing, elang menyongsong*'. While twenty-one respondents answered that the

proverb is the same as the Indonesian proverb '*kerja baik berimbunan, datang buruk berhamburan*'.

Table 13 Indonesian equivalents

「稼ぐに追いつく貧乏なし。」
"Kasegu ni oitsuku binbou nashi"

No.	Indonesian proverbs	Total	Percentage (%)
1.	<i>Fajar menyingsing, elang menyongsong Kerja baik berimbunan,</i>	20 people	49 percent
2.	<i>datang buruk berhamburan</i>	21 people	51 percent

4. Conclusion

Proverbs, which are short sentences containing lessons or insinuations that have been used by people since a long time ago, are now no longer a habit to be used in everyday life. Based on the results of data analysis, there are many Japanese language students in Bandung who do not know in depth about Japanese proverbs or kotowaza. From the meanings of proverbs that have been collected from respondents of Japanese language students in Bandung, the meanings of proverbs containing the meaning of advice are three proverbs, while those containing the meaning of satire are two proverbs. Then from the data it can be concluded that the Japanese proverbs that have their equivalents in Indonesian are five proverbs. The number of equivalents in the proverbs that have been described is two equivalents in Indonesian proverbs. In this study only discusses five proverbial sentences whose proverbial meaning is often used in Indonesian society with the same Indonesian proverbs, so there is a need for further research.

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