JAPANESE ONOMATOPOEIC SEMANTIC STRUCTURES A NATURAL SEMANTIC METALANGUAGE APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Onomatopoeia is a product of language and culture. Although almost all languages have an onomatopoeia, they are different in application. Japanese onomatopoeia is more like French onomatopoeia in that it not only imitates the sound that is heard, but also that which the senses do not hear. This research aims to describe the original meaning of Japanese onomatopoeic verbs into a simple one so that they are easily understood by the cross-language community. The method used is the technique of observing and recording data obtained from written media such as textbooks and websites. The findings obtained from this study are that several semantic structures show similarities and differences, namely the differences of intention and desire from state verbs, process verbs and action verbs.

Background of Study

Language as a communication and interaction tool is meaningful sounds that are used to deliver messages and opinions among humans in a group of society which is related to events happening around them. Socially, the function of language is as a communication tool to share information. That is why understanding the meaning of a language is important to make communication between humans easier (Saddhono, 2018).

Language is considered as communicative if the language itself can be understood by the listener. Language has extraordinary power. Mistakes in understanding a language can cause a misunderstanding between the speaker and the listener. This situation can be a big problem when it is related to human lives (Saddhono, 2017).

Understanding the meaning of language is related to a linguistic branch called semantics. According to Kroeger (2018:4) semantics is a study about the relationship between linguistic form and meaning. The relation between sentence form and meaning generally is not random, but compositional. It means that the meaning of an expression can be predicted from the meaning of the words in the sentence and how it is combined.

Japanese is one of the most popular languages in the world. This is influenced by the technology that is mastered by Japan and Japanese culture that is spreading massively all over the world. Those are the reasons why students all over the world learn the Japanese language and culture.

This study examines is focused on how the semantic structure of verbs in Japanese onomatopoeia. The reason of choosing this research object is because it is hard to understand the meaning of onomatopoeia, more so if the onomatopoeia not only imitates sounds from human, animal, and nature like the onomatopoeia that the Japanese language has.

The uniqueness of a language can happen based on several factors and not all words in a language can be translated to another language, like what was stated by Wierzbicka (1996:12) and Goddard (1994:9). That is why the understanding of onomatopoeia in Japanese can be an interesting object to be studied in this research. The theory of natural semantics metalanguage is the constructing theory in this research, it is hoped that this research can give a clear picture of the semantic components and structures from onomatopoeia in the Japanese language. Like what was stated by Beratha (2000:241) that every verb in a language has structures and semantic

roles that are formed from a configuration of word meanings that reflected the supporting culture. Which is why the research regarding verbal semantic structure of Japanese onomatopoeia is even more interesting to be studied.

Research Methodology

The study of verbal onomatopoeia in the Japanese language is generally done syntactically and morphologically. As far as the researcher knows, there are still a few kinds of research that study deeply about verbal semantics onomatopoeia in the Japanese language with natural semantic metalanguage (NSM) approach. This research aims to describe the original meaning of Japanese onomatopoeic verbs into a simple one so that they are easily understood by the cross-language community. As we all know, the usage of onomatopoeia in the Japanese language is often used. Even though Japanese speakers can use other lexicons to explain the information that they want to deliver, however, the usage of onomatopoeia will make the communication more effective and efficient.

The data of this research are the Japanese onomatopoeic verbs in spoken variety in textbooks and websites. The data are filtered with the listening method that is supported by note-taking. All verbs are grouped according to their semantic type. The verb type name refers to the root universal lexicon; like SEEING, BEING, SAYING, and so on. The use of paraphrasing techniques in this paper refers to the original meaning mechanism proposed by Wierzbicka (1996), which was adopted according to the object of the study of Japanese onomatopoeic verbs. This needs to be stated because not all the original meanings are following the semantic character of the Japanese language.

The limitation of this research is the study of verb word-class onomatopoeia in the Japanese language so that this research can be more focused and not too broad. Meanwhile, the study of semantic structure that is used in this research is an analysis of original meaning in onomatopoeia verbs in the Japanese language. The research method used in this research is descriptive.

Basic Concept and Theoretical Framework

Japanese cultures are different than what Indonesian has. Like what was stated by Leech (1983:15) that different cultures will also work differently. Therefore, an understanding between cultures is needed. The understanding of language and culture according to Kramsch (1998:3) is when languages are used in the context of communication; language is intertwined with culture in a complex way and a lot of ways.

Based on those, it can be concluded that language is not merely a tool for communication. Through language, the culture of the language owner can be discovered. Simply, language is a representation of culture. Therefore, it can also be said that the usage of language (utterance strategy) in Japanese society is different than Indonesia's utterance strategy. Japanese society has a closed and several interpretations of utterance strategy. Which is why onomatopoeia is used as one of the communication aspects by the Japanese based on the similarity of perception (Sasamoto 2019:81). Although onomatopoeia can be replaced with another lexicon that has the same meaning, however, it cannot always communicate the same feeling (Ono 2007:2).

The same with other language products, onomatopoeia is one of the language products, which is the creation of words that imitate nature sounds, physical effort, and human expression. Onomatopoeia that is owned by the Japanese language is not the same as English onomatopoeia. Japanese onomatopoeia is not only imitating sounds that are heard by human senses but also sounds that do not have sounds like わくわく (*waku-waku*) which means joy or happiness, いらいら (*ira-ira*) which means angry and so on.

According to Akita and Dingemanse (2017:2), various terminologies are used to group words that are included in the description of onomatopoeia, such as mimetic, expressive, and idiophone. Onomatopoeia originated from Greek

and came to English terms in the middle of 1500s (Merriam-Webster n.d.). For instance, there is a term *'telur ceplok'* in Indonesian, the word *'ceplok'* itself imitate the sound of the egg that is cracked and splashed on to the pan, which causes the sound *'ceplok'*, or the sound of cow's *'moo'* which is the imitation of cow's sound itself.

This research uses two basic concepts, which are verb and semantic structure. According to Givon (2001:51–52) and Frawley (1992:145), the verb is one of the main word class lexicons in languages. Verb classification based on situation and semantic character is categorized by circumstances, process, and action (Comrie 1998:13). The verb has a series of special characteristics that stick to the arguments that are tied with verb meanings which decide the presence of the noun itself (Cook 1979:37). The next concept, semantic structure means a configuration of meaning (Chafe 1970:55). According to Chafe (1970:144), the semantic structure is a compilation of relations between central verbs and a series of a noun that each stands on a specific semantic relation with a verb.

Theoretical concepts that are relevant in formulating semantic structure is semantic primes and natural semantic metalanguage. Original meaning according to Wierzbicka (1996:10) is elements that are used to limit word meanings that cannot be defined by the words itself. Wierzbicka (2014:12) also stated that there are 64 items of original meaning elements that can be used to paraphrase a lexicon meaning. Every device of 'semantic prime' itself will be adopted and modified based on the profile of the Japanese language. It is important to introduce because it is not certain that every original meaning is suitable for Japanese semantic characters. It is hoped that through this technique verbal semantic structure onomatopoeia in the Japanese language can be found.

Table 1 - Original meaning (Japanese exponent), grouped in related categories (adapted from (Goddard 2012:26)).

WATASHI *I*, ANATA *you*, DAREKA *someone*, NANIKA~MONO~KOTO *something/thing*, HITO~HITOBITO *people*, KARADA *body*	substantives
SHURUI *kind*, BUBUN *part*	relational substantives
KORE *this*, ONAJI *the same*, HOKA *other*	determiners
HITO- ~ICHI- *one*, FUTA- ~NI- *two*, TAKUSAN *many~much*, SUKOSHI *little~few*, IKUTSUKA *some*, MINNA *all*	quantifiers
II *good*, WARUI *bad*	evaluators
OOKII *big*, CHIISAI *small*	descriptors
OMOU *think*, SHIRU *know*, HOSHII~-TAI~NOZOMU *want*, KANJIRU *feel*, MIRU *see*, KIKU *hear*	mental predicates
IU *say*, KOTOBA *words*, HONTOO *true*	speech
SURU *do*, OKORU~OKIRU *happen*, UGOKU *move*, FURERU *touch*	actions, events, movement, contact
(DOKOKA) IRU~ARU *be (somewhere)*, IRU~ARU *there is*, MOTSU *have*, (DAREKA/NANIKA) DEARU *be (someone/something)*	location, existence, possession, specification
IKIRU *live*, SHINU *die*	life and death
ITSU~TOKI *when~time*, IMA *now*, MAE *before*, ATO *after*, NAGAI AIDA *a long time*, MIJIKAI AIDA *a short*	time

time, SHIBARAKU NO AIDA *for some time*, SUGUNI *moment*	
DOKO~TOKORO *where~place*, KOKO *here*, UE *above*, SHITA *below*, CHIKAI *near*, TOOI *far*, MEN *side*, NAKA *inside*	space
-NAI *not*, TABUN *maybe*, DEKIRU *can*, -KARA *because*, MOSHI(BA) *if*	logical concepts
SUGOKU *very*, MOTTO *more*	intensifier, augmentor
YOO~DOO~YOONI *like/how/as*	similarity

Natural semantic metalanguage is a combination of lexicon items from the original meaning. The base unit is made equal with the clause that is formed by substantives and predicates as well as several additions of elements that are determined by the predicates (Goddard 1997:201; Wierzbicka 1996:114–44). There are three reasons why the researcher chose this theory. First, every meaning such as lexical meaning, illocution meaning, and grammatical meaning can be explicated using NSM theory. Second, the principle of NSM which is a natural condition of a language is maintaining one form for one meaning and one meaning for one form. Lastly, explication of meaning in NSM theory is framed in a metalanguage that comes from natural language.

Japanese Verbal Structure Semantics
1.1. Situational Verb

The situational verb in the Japanese language stated that a different entity that lies in a situation or certain condition. The characteristics of this verb are 1) Semantically stative or stable because the situation expressed generally does not accept the progressive form and no action transfer from one participant to the other; 2) Cannot be used in an imperative sentence and requires an object in the structure; and 3) Does not have semantic characteristics on purpose, because events that are pictured accidentally by an object. For a clearer understanding, pay attention to the example below.

1.	*Masui*	*ga*	*samekirezu*	***utsura-utsura***	*shiteiru*	*toki*
	anaesthesia	NOM	cannot stand	**drowsily**	while	when
	`When I start to sleep because of the anaesthesia,					
	kazoku	*ga*	*byōshitsu*	*ni*	*haitte*	*kita*
	family	NOM	room	DAT	enter	come
	my family came to my room`					

The *utsura-utsura* lexicon has a parallel concept of meaning with drowsily in English. Someone who experiences this will lose consciousness because of one thing. The *utsura-utsura* lexicon is often used to describe situations that the offender does not want and is not intent on. The semantic structure of the verb *utsura-utsura*:

X sees something
Because X sees something, X knows something
In a blink, X sees Y
X is unconscious
X does not want this
X sees without desir

2.	*Yūbe*	*amari*	*nete*	*inai*	*node*	*jugyōchū*	*tsui*	**uto-uto**	*shite-shima*	*tta*
	last night	a little bit	sleep	no	because	during class	unconscious	**nodding off**	while	past form
	`Because I didn't sleep last night, I am nodding off during class.`									

The *uto-uto* lexicon has the same concept of meaning as nodding off in English. A person experiencing this will lose consciousness for a short time because of what happened before. Usually due to insufficient sleep. The *uto-uto* lexicon is often used to describe situations that the perpetrator does not want, and the incident was accidental. The semantic structure of the verb *uto-uto:*

Because X did something bad before

X does not want this

X did it accidentally

X　　　does　　　not　　　realize　　　this

3.	*Haha*	*wa*	*amikake*	*no*	*se-ta*	*wo*	*motta*	*mama*	**kokkuri-kokkuri**	*shite iru*
	mother	TOP	knitting	GEN	sweater	ACC	holding	still	**nodding off**	when
	`Mother is nodding off when knitting a sweater.`									

The *kokkuri-kokkuri* lexicon has the same concept of meaning as nodding off in English. Almost the same as the *uto-uto* lexicon, but the *kokkuri-kokkuri* lexicon is usually caused by doing a tiring job. The semantic structure of the verb

kokkuri-kokkuri:

X does not want this

X did it accidentally

X does not realize this

X is doing something

Onomatopoeic Type	Meaning	Duration	Desire	On purpose	Impression
Utsura-utsura	drowsily, nodding off	long	✗	✗	neutral
Uto-uto	falling into a doze, dozing off, nodding off	short	✗	✗	neutral
Kokkuri-kokkuri	niddle-noddle, nid-nod, nodding off	short	✗	✗	neutral

1.2. Process Verb

Process verb in the Japanese language stated an entity that lies in a situation or condition which becomes another condition. Japanese process verb showed changes or dynamics. Allowing the usage of progressive form and unable to be used to make imperative sentences. Does not have semantic characteristics on purpose. To understand clearer, pay attention to the example below:

4.	*Sumai*	*ga*	*kireta*	*no-de*	*sakki*		
	anaesthesi	NOM	ran out	because	then		

	a						
	`Because my anaesthesia ran out,						
	ha	*wo*	*nuita*	*tokoro*	*ga*	***zuki-zuki***	*suru*
	tooth	ACC	took out	place	NOM	**throbbing with pain**	do
	my tooth that was taken out throbbing with pain.`						

The *zuki-zuki* lexicon has the same concept as throbbing with pain in English. Someone who experiences this will feel throbbing pain or aching in his limbs, especially in the teeth. The semantic structure of the verb *zuki-zuki:*

X experiences and feels something bad
X does not want that
X does not do something
At that time, something happened to X

5.	*Netsu*	*ga*	*aru*	*no kana*	*nan-da*	*ga*	***zoku-zoku***	*suru*
	fever	NOM	there is	apparently	something	NOM	**shivering**	do
	`Apparently, I have a fever. Because my body is shivering.`							

The *zoku-zoku* lexicon has the same concept as shivering in English. This lexicon describes a limb trembling when feeling pain from a fever. Trembling limbs are usually limbs like hands. The semantic structure of the verb *zoku-zoku:*

X experiences and feels something bad
X does not want that
X does not do something
At that time, something happened to X

6.	*Ashi*	*no*	*ura*	*ga*	***chiku-chiku***	*suru*
	foot	GEN	back	NOM	**prickling**	do
	`My foot feels like it was prickling,					
	kutsu	*ni*	*nani-ka*	*haitteru*	*no*	*kana*
	shoes	DAT	is	get into	NMLZ	apparently
	apparently, something got into my shoes.`					

The *chiku-chiku* lexicon has the same concept of meaning as prickling in English. This lexicon describes a limb feeling pain from being punctured by a small, sharp object. The semantic structure of the verb *chiku-chiku:*

X experiences and feels something bad
X does not want that
X does not do something
At that time, something happened to X

7.	*Umi*	*de*	*hi*	*ni*	*yakete*	*karadajū*

	beach	LOC	sun	DAT	burnt	whole body
	`My whole body is stinging because I have been burnt by the sun					
	ga	***hiri-hiri***	*surunda*	*sawa*	*ranaide*	*kure*
	NOM	**stinging**	have done	touch	do not	let
	when tanning at the beaches. Please do not touch.`					

The *hiri-hiri* lexicon has the same concept of meaning as stinging in English. This lexicon describes a limb that feels pain from direct sunburn. It usually lasts a long time and is unwanted by the perpetrator. The semantic structure of the verb *hiri-hiri:*

X experiences and feels something bad
X does not want that
X does not do something
At that time, something happened to X

Onomatopoeic Type	Meaning	Duration	Desire	On purpose	Impression
Zuki-zuki	throbbing with pain	long	✕	✕	neutral
Zoku-zoku	shivering, feeling chilly	short	✕	✕	neutral
Chiku-chiku	prickling, stinging, tingling	short	✕	✕	neutral
Hiri-hiri	stinging (pain), smarting, tingling	long	✕	✕	neutral

1.3. Action Verb

The Japanese action verb is a verb that has action semantic characterization, which are stating action movements, utterance, and movements. The subject from this verb is a noun that has animated semantic characterization and acts as the actor from an action. It has semantic components that are dynamic, intentional, kinesis, and imperative. Japanese action verbs require the presence of argument agent as an actor. For a clearer understanding, pay attention to the example below.

8.	*Ano*	*futari*	*wa*	*itsumo*	*hito*	*mae*	*de*	***beta-beta***	*shiteiru*
	they	both	TOP	always	people	in front	LOC	**clinging**	often
	`They are always clinging in front of other people.`								

The *beta-beta* lexicon has the same concept of meaning as clinging in English. This lexicon describes two people who carry out an activity. The surrounding people felt something. It usually takes a long time and is wanted by the perpetrator. The semantic structure of the verb *beta-beta:*

X did something to Y
Y did something to X
Both want it to happen
Both are full of love

9.	*Kōkōsei*	*ga*	*asa*	*kara*	*eki*	*de*	***icha-icha***
	high school student	NOM	morning	from	station	LOC	**flirting**
	`Since this morning I have been seeing high school students flirting,							
	shiteru	*no*	*wo*	*mite*	*hara*	*ga*	*tatta*
	while	NMLZ	ACC	look	stomach	NOM	stand
	I feel like I want to get upset.`							

The *icha-icha* lexicon has the same concept of meaning as flirting in English. This lexicon describes two people who carry out an activity. The surrounding people felt something. It usually takes a long time and is wanted by the perpetrator. The semantic structure of the verb *icha-icha:*

X did something to Y
Y did something to X
Both want it to happen
Both are full of love

9.	*Tomodachi*	*ni*	*ikura*	*suki*	*de mo*	*sonna ni*	***dere-dere***
	friend	DAT	however much	love	even	like that	**lovestruck**
	`No matter how much you love him do not being lovestruck,							
	shi	*naide*	*motto*	*shikkari*	*shi ro*	*yo*	
	do	do not	more	proper	do	SFP	
	do as usual.`							

The lexicon *dere-dere* has the same meaning concept as lovestruck in English. This lexicon describes one person who performs an activity to his partner. The surrounding people felt something. It usually takes a long time and is wanted by the perpetrator. The semantic structure of the verb *dere-dere:*

X did something to Y
Y does not want it
X forced Y to accept X's action

Onomatopoeic Type	Meaning	Source of Feelings	Desire	On purpose	Impression
Beta-beta	clinging (e.g. of a person), following around, being all over (each other), flirting	Both	✓	✓	negative
Icha-icha	flirting, making out	Both	✓	✓	negative
Dere-dere	flirting, philandering, womanizing, being lovestruck, fawning, mooning	Only one person	✓	✓	negative

The table below is the conclusion of semantic verb classification in the Japanese language.

Table 2 - Semantic verb classification in Japanese

Semantic Characterization	Situational Verb	Process Verb	Action Verb
Stability	✓	✗	✗
Dynamic	✗	✓	✓
Purpose	✗	✗	✓
Punctuality	✗	✗/✓	✗/✓
Aspects	✗	✗/✓	✗/✓
Kinesis	✗	✗	✗/✓

Conclusion

The semantic structure of onomatopoeia verb in the Japanese language is formulated from several polysemes. Those several semantic structures showed similarity and differences. The semantic structure on the group verb sleep does not have a desire and is not on purpose. The same thing as the group verb stab, it does not have a desire and is not on purpose. However, in the group verb love or making out, there is a purposive factor and there is desire. This research could be further developed, especially about the word construction of onomatopoeic verbs in the Japanese language.

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