

# Metaphors and Cultural Values Part of Plants in Japanese Proverbs

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**Abstract.** This study examines Japanese proverbs using the metaphor of the names of plant parts. The name of the plant part is one element that forms Japanese proverbs. The research aims to find several things, namely: 1) the use of plant parts names in Japanese proverbs; 2) finding the lexical and idiomatic meaning of plant parts names in Japanese proverbs; 3) finding the metaphor of plant parts in Japanese proverbs, and 4) finding the cultural values contained in Japanese proverbs that use the concept of the name of plant parts. The data collection was carried out by the author by taking data on Japanese proverbs from the internet and books. The results showed that there are names of plant parts used in Japanese proverbs, namely: 1) there are six groups of names of plant parts, including fruit, seed, root, leaf, flower, and stem; 2) there are lexical and idiomatic meanings of the names of plant parts in Japanese proverbs; 3) metaphors contained in proverbs that use the names of plant parts, namely, effort and self-protection; 4) cultural values contained in proverbs that use the names of plant parts, namely, respect for life, hard work, and vigilance for life.

## 1 Introduction

Language has a primary function, namely as a means of communication. Japanese is a complex language. Compared to Indonesian, Japanese letters and sentence patterns are very different. In addition, the habit of Japanese people using other expressions to refine the speech that wants to be conveyed also causes Japanese language learners to have difficulty understanding the meaning of a sentence or speech. Therefore, linguistics becomes a significant thing to be studied by language learners. Language learners master proverbs, vocabulary, idioms, and other language -related knowledge.

Proverbs are expressions that do not directly but implicitly convey something that the listener or the reader can understand because they both live in the same cultural scope. Society's social and cultural values, moral values, and normal functions can be known from proverbs.

Proverbs from several studies have been carried out using several lexicons, such as the lexicon of plants, animals, inanimate objects, cosmos, and humans. Using these names is one of the uses of figurative language and must be interpreted with a symbolic meaning. The figurative meaning is the meaning of linguistic forms that deviate from the referent [1].

One of the exciting things about Japanese proverbs is the use of the names of plant parts. The following is an example of using the words of plant parts in Japanese proverbs:

- a. 蛇は竹の筒に入れても真っすぐにならぬ  
*Hebi wa take no tsutsu ni iretemo massugu ni naranu*  
The snake will not be straight, even if it is in a bamboo tube.
- b. 蒔かぬ種は生えぬ  
*Makanutanehahaenu*  
No seeds to sow.

The above proverb names plant parts as the constituent elements, including bamboo and seeds. The proverb (a) take, namely bamboo shows the parable of a person whose stance has been firmly established so that the decision is unanimous and cannot be changed again; proverb (b) tane, namely the seed, shows the parable of the effort of someone who does nothing but hopes for good results.

The use of the name of the plant part is an application of figurative language whose type is a metaphor. It also represents an idiomatic meaning in proverbs and cultural values in Japanese society. Based on this background, this study aims to discover the metaphors and cultural values in Japanese proverbs using the lexeme of plant parts.

### 1.1 Proverbs

Proverbs are sentences with a fixed structure, and sentences with inactive forms are used repeatedly, so it is hoped that the perceptions reflected or encoded in the penalty will be firmly entrenched in students' minds. This is because language, including proverbs, can direct the user's perception. The more it is repeated, the stronger it is embedded in the mind [3].

It should be noted that thimbles, expressions, and parables are included in proverbs because the meaning of proverbs [4] is :

1. A group of words or sentences that have a fixed arrangement, usually symbolizing a specific meaning (in proverbs including thimbles, expressions, parables).
2. Expressions or sentences concise and solid, containing comparisons, parables, advice, principles of life, or rules of behavior.

### 1.2 Metaphors

The use of plant names is an application of figurative language. One type is a metaphor. Metaphor has two components, namely target and source. The source is a concept used as the basis for conceptualization, and the target is a concept where conceptualization is directed. Marks are usually more abstract, and references are more concrete. The similarities between the features of the target and the source make comprehending the metaphor's meaning easier. By comparing the characteristics possessed by the two, it is found that the basis of a metaphor is used. In addition, similarities are not always the basis for showing the relationship between the target and the source. Metaphor is the use of a language to refer to something other than what it was originally applied to or what it is, literally means, in order to suggest some resemblance or make a connection between two things [2]. With the use of metaphors in Japanese proverbs, especially the lexicon of the names of plant parts, this research becomes engaging and directed.

### 1.3 Culture Values

Culture is everything that individuals obtain from society, including beliefs, customs, artistic norms, eating habits, and skills that are acquired not from their creativity but from the past that are obtained through formal or informal education [5]. From this definition, it can be concluded that culture is all things that result from human creation as the subject of society.

This language is the result of the human product used by humans and passed down from one generation to the next.

The cultural values in this study are understood as values that refer to the entire behavior of the community as a result of being cultured. The artistic value system is the core value of a society. These values are usually used as demands for individual members of the community to act and behave.

## 2 Methods

This research is semantic research focusing on the study of cognitive semantics. The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method. The researcher tries to describe the metaphor of plant parts in Japanese proverbs in-depth. The data collection used the free-of-conversation listening method, which the author carried out by taking data on Japanese proverbs from the internet and books. All of the proverbs in books and the internet were listened to, collected, and selected according to the topic, namely the name of the plant part. After the data is collected, the researcher analyzes the information with the method of interpretation or interpretation. The analysis carried out on Japanese proverbs with the lexicon of plant part names includes the classification of Japanese proverbs of plant part names, metaphorical meanings, and cultural values contained in these proverbs.

## 3 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Names of Plant Parts in Japanese Proverbs

In Japanese proverbs, approximately 54 Japanese proverbs use the names of plants and plant parts that researchers have looked for in the proverbs book published by Taishukan Shouten and online via the internet. Based on the analysis, it was found that there were six groups of lexicon names the names of plant parts, namely Fruit (実), Seed (種), root (根), Leaf (葉), Flower (花), and Stem (幹).

### 3.2 Lexical and Idiomatic Meanings of Plant Parts in Japanese Proverbs

No.	Plant Part Name	Proverb	Lexical Meaning	Idiomatic Meaning
1	Fruit (実)	徒花に実は生らぬ	Fruits don't grow on flowers	No matter how good it looks, a plan not executed steadily without content will not produce good results
		花も実もある	There are flowers and fruit	Not only beautiful from the appearance, but the inside is also complete
2	Seed (種)	蒔かぬ種は生えぬ	The seeds sown don't grow	It's useless to expect good results without effort

		楽は苦の種、 苦は楽の種	Ease is the seed of suffering, and suffering is the seed of ease	Bear current difficulties in order to have a comfortable future
3	Root (根)	舌は禍の根	The tongue is the root of evil	Refrain from speaking badly
		草(の根)を分けて探す	Look for grassroots separately	Do everything to find it
4	Leaves (葉)	石が流れて木の葉が沈む	Rocks float and leave the sink.	Things will be the opposite of usual reasons
		根も葉もない	No roots or leaves	There is no basis for being reliable
5	Flowers (花)	きれいな花にはとげがある	Beautiful flowers have thorns	Beauty can be a hidden evil
		徒花に実は生らぬ	Fruits don't grow on flowers	No matter how good it looks, a plan not executed steadily without content will not produce good results
		高嶺の花	Lofty Dream	You can't get something if you only see it from a distance
		隣の花は赤い	The flower next to it is red	Want something unusual for someone else right away
		一花咲かせる	Make one flower bloom	Temporary prosperity
6	Stem (幹)	幹木にまさる梢木なし	There is no treetop better than a trunk tree	There is no branch better than the trunk

### 3.3 The Metaphor of Plant Parts in Japanese Proverbs

The proverbs studied in this article are proverbs that use the lexicon of the names of plant parts as a comparison, as it is known that metaphor has two components, namely target and source. To be able to understand the meaning contained in the analogy, it is found that the similarity of the characteristics between the target and the head is located. By comparing the characteristics possessed by the two, it is found that the basis of a metaphor is used. In addition, the similarity is not always the basis for showing the relationship between the target and the source. However, the conceptualization that corresponds between the target and the source is more highlighted [6]. The following results from the interpretation of the metaphorical meaning of plant names in Japanese proverbs.

a. A proverb that describes the name of a plant part as a business parable

1) 蒔かぬ種は生えぬ

*Makanu tane wa haenu*

Source realm: The seeds sown don't grow

Target realm: It's useless to expect good results without effort

The proverb describes someone who does not try but expects to get good results.

## 2) 苦は楽の種

*Ku wa raku no tane*

Source realm: Suffering is the seed of comfort

Target realm: Bear current hardships for a comfortable future

The proverb illustrates that people today must try no matter how hard it is to get a good and comfortable life in the future. The proverb indicates that the metaphor of the seed is effort. As we know, seeds are the forerunner of plants that will grow to produce. If there is no seed, then there will be no plants that grow and multiply.

## b. A proverb that describes the name of a plant part as a parable of self-protection

## 3) きれいな花にはとげがある

*Kireina hana ni hatoge ga aru*

Source realm: Beautiful flowers have thorns

Target realm: In beauty can be hidden evil

The proverb illustrates that something beautiful can have evil. Like the thorns on a flower, the thorns may not be visible, and if someone touches it, one's hand will be injured because the thorns are sharp and painful. But the thorns found in flowers can also protect themselves from animal attacks and keep the flowers beautiful and not damaged. Therefore, the proverb indicates that the thorn metaphor is self-protection. Crimes for others who have a purpose of protecting themselves.

## 4) 舌は禍の根

*Shita wa wazawai no ne*

Source realm: The tongue is the root of evil

Target realm: Refrain from speaking badly

The proverb describes that something that comes out of one's mouth can make another person hurt. The tongue can be a dangerous resource because if we are not careful speaking, it can affect others and return to us. Wrong words are easy to use, so one needs to be cautious in speaking. An uncontrolled tongue will self-destruct. Like roots, roots are plant organs that play an essential role in holding the plant up. Therefore, the proverb indicates that the root metaphor is self-protection. Roots and mouth are equally important because if you don't take care of them, you won't be able to live well.

### 3.4 The Cultural Values of Plant Parts in Japanese Proverbs

From the data of proverbs that use the lexicon of plant parts, it can be seen that plants have many benefits for humans and often appear in proverbs. The following are cultural values represented in Japanese proverbs that use the lexicon of plant parts.

## a. Appreciating Life

In Japan, the phenomenon of jisatsu (suicide) often occurs. This jisatsu phenomenon is caused by many factors, one of which is economic reasons. Various efforts have been made and are still being carried out by the Japanese government to deal with this phenomenon. Recently, the case of jisatsu in Japan has decreased, and Japanese society now reflects the value of appreciating life. This attitude of appreciating life is found in the proverb:

## 1) 命あつての物種

*Inochi atte no monodane*

'Life is just that, but it's still worth it.'

Since everything is life-threatening, we have to put our lives on the line. This proverb is a commandment that life should be cherished at all times. "Seed" is something that is the source of things.

- 2) 死んで花実が咲くものか

*Shinden Namiga Sakumono*

'You have to live no matter what.'

A word that tells those who want to die that it is not a waste of life. "Flower fruit blooms" means that everything is going well and good results are obtained. Whether the flower or fruit will bloom or not when it dies will be something that will be good someday if you are still alive, no matter what the situation is, but if you die, nothing good will happen that you have to live no matter what.

The value that can be learned from this proverb is that humans must respect their lives because every life is noble, and every human being is a survivor who must be able to appreciate and survive.

b. Hard Work Effort

Japan is one of the developed countries on the Asian continent, and the Japanese are known to have a high level of discipline and work productivity. Makoto's attitude or sincerity gives birth to high work productivity and discipline. This attitude to always try and work hard is found in the proverb:

- 3) 蒔かぬ種は生えぬ

*Makanutane Haenu*

'There is no point in expecting good results without effort.'

If you don't sow seeds, there will be no flowers or fruits and no harvest. If there is no cause, there is no effect. Also, if you don't work, you can't make a profit.

- 4) 楽は苦の種 苦は楽の種

*Raku wa ku no tane, Ku wa ku no tane*

'Bearing current hardships for a comfortable future.'

If you take it easy, you will have trouble later, and vice versa. If you do it hard, the hardships of today will lead to ease in the future, so we must endure hardships for the future.

The value learned from these two proverbs is that hard work will never betray the results. Japanese people have a high motivation to move forward.

c. Life Precautions

Life vigilance is a careful and agile attitude in dealing with various threats that interfere with survival. The goal is not to get misfortune, misfortune, or problems that harm you. One of the values of vigilance in life is to be careful in speaking.

- 5) 言わぬが花

*Iwanu ga hana*

'Silence is golden.'

Flowers are a metaphor that everything is something that can be revoked if said frankly, and it's worth keeping quiet. It's better to be silent when we can't bring something valuable. Beneficial here means goodness, which brings benefits both to oneself and to others.

- 6) 舌は禍の根

*Shita wa wazawai no ne*

'Refrain from speaking bad.'

"Tongue" here means to speak. This is one of those proverbs that we must refrain from saying that excessive speech is often a source of disaster. We should keep our tongue by speaking only as necessary or talking about goodness. The value learned from these two proverbs is the adage to be careful in speaking to avoid harming yourself.

## 4 Conclusion

Japanese people don't like small talk and are used to expressing things indirectly through proverbs. Proverbs are expressions that do not directly but implicitly convey something that the listener or the reader can understand because they both live in the same cultural scope. The lexicon of plant parts is widely used in Japanese proverbs and inspires their creators. Japanese people often use the metaphor of plant parts to describe human traits close to the nature of the plant parts. The plant parts used in Japanese proverbs are Fruit, Seed, Root, Leaf, Flower, and Stem. Cognitive semantic mechanisms occur in the metaphor of plant parts in Japanese proverbs. Metaphors contained in proverbs use the names of plant parts, namely, effort and self-protection. Cultural values contained in proverbs use the words of plant parts, namely, respect for life, hard work, and vigilance for energy.

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