Five Japanese Synonymous Verbs *GO*

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Abstract

The proper use of synonymous words is a problem that is often faced by foreign language learners. Native speakers of a language often experience difficulties when asked to explain the differences in synonymous words. They use their linguistic instincts to differentiate the use of these words, or what in Japanese is called kan 勘. This paper raises the synonym of the verb 'go' which in Japanese has five words, namely omomuku 赴く, irassharu いらっしゃる, mairu 参る, kaeru 帰る, and iku 行く. This paper uses a qualitative descriptive method. Synonyms of these verbs will be observed based on the frequency of their use in writing and oral languages in two Japanese corpora. In addition, the meaning components of these verbs are mapped to see the range of use of each of the verbs. Based on observations on the frequency of use, it is known that these five verbs have differences in the variety of languages used, namely: omomuku have the lowest frequency of use in both written and spoken registers. Meanwhile, based on observations on the mapping of meaning components, the five 'go' verbs also show differences, namely: iku is the verb with the most meaning components. Thus, it can be concluded that these five synonymous verbs 'go' cannot completely replace each other. There are some usage limitations in the presence of each of these verbs.

1. Introduction

Japanese learners often encounter difficulties when facing words that are synonymous in Japanese. The difficulty is regarding the proper use of each of those synonymous words. Sudaryanto (2015:70) explains that "synonym" means the same information, similar meaning, and different forms. Some previous studies regarding Japanese synonymous words has been conducted. Kato (n.d.), in her research titled "Nihongo Kyouiku no Shomondai - Ruigigo Bunseki Shikoudoushi 'mezasu' to 'nerau' -", examined the directive verbs of Japanese, namely *mezasu* and *nerau*. Miyata (n.d.), in his research titled "Gairaigo 'meritto' to sono ruigigo no imihikaku - shinbun wo shiryo to shite -", examined the meaning comparison of the loanword in Japanese, namely *meritto* and its synonyms, namely *chousho, rieki,* ad *riten*. The source of this study was the Asahi, Mainichi, and Yomiuri newspapers from 2003 to 2005. Miyata's study is a continuation of the previous Miyata and Tanaka Studies in 2006 that examined similar things, namely the loan-word *risuku* and its synonyms, namely *kiken* and *kikensei*. Gumbira (2013), in her research entitled "Analysis of the Meaning of *Omou* and *Kangaeru* Verbs as Synonyms", examined the synonymous form of Japanese verbs *omou* and *kangaeru* that both can be translated into *berpikir* in Indonesian. Gumbira's study (2013) aims to find out the differences and similarities of *omou* and *kangaeru* verbs in terms of structure, meaning, and whether the two can replace each other in sentences. Shiba and Cho (2017), in their research titled "Koopasu ni

Motozuita Ruigigo Bunseki - 'Miotosu', 'Misugosu', 'Minogasu' wo rei ni -.", examined three synchronous verbs in Japanese, namely *miotosu*, *misugosu*, and *minogasu*. Shiba and Cho's study (2017) primarily relates to the colocation information and grammar patterns of the three synonymous verbs. A study of these three synonymous verbs was actually already conducted by Nagashima in 1981. Nagashima's study (1981) at that time showed similarities and differences between these three synonymous verbs through the characteristics of the subjects and objects of those verbs. However, Shiba and Cho (2017) criticized nagashima 's study (1981) as still unclear showing differences in nuance and behavior of the subjects of the three synonymous verbs. Zarifa, Herniwati, and Sutjiati (2017), in their research entitled "Analysis of the Misuse of *Taisetsu na, Daiji na*, and *Juuyou na*", examined the misuses of three Japanese adjectives that have the meaning of 'important' by students in the fourth semester at the University of Education Indonesia. Zarifa, Herniwati, and Sutjiati (2017) mentioned two factors that are the cause of the misuse among these three adjectives. First, the students do not understand the difference in the use of these three adjectives; second, the students do not understand the difference in the meaning of 'important' that exists in the context of the sentence. Based on the literature studies that have been done, it can be said that the potential of synonymy studies can still be developed further as done through this research.

This paper raises five Japanese verbs that Backhouse (2016:112-113) says have similar meanings, namely *omomuku*赴く, *irassharu*いらっしゃる, *mairu*参る, *kaeru*帰る, and *iku*行く. These five verbs can be said to be synonymous because according to Momiyama (in Sutedi, 2008:129), there are four ways of identifying synonymy, one of which is: several words when translated into foreign languages will be one word. For example, the word *oriru* and *kudaru* in Japanese can be regarded as synonymous because they can be translated into "turun" ('to go down') in Indonesian. The five verbs that are discussed in this paper if translated into English can be translated into "to go". The problem raised in this paper is about the level of synonymy of the synonymous verbs observed through differences in the frequency of use in the corpora and the meaning components.

2. Research Methods

In order to observe differences in frequency of use, the data used in this paper were taken from two Japanese corpora, namely the Balance Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese (BCCWJ) and Corpus of Spoken Japanese (CSJ). The BCCWJ itself contains over one hundred million words and has been launched to the public since December 2011 (Maekawa et al., 2014). Whereas, CSJ contains around seven million and more words. Baker (2010, 4-5) explains that the word "corpus" comes from Latin meaning 'body'. In English it has a single form of corpus and a plural form of corpora. Corpus is a collection of languages that occur naturally and are stored as computer files. The presentation of observations regarding differences in frequency of use is presented in the form of a bar chart. Explanations of the numbers in tables and diagrams are given using words or sentences to describe and elaborate the findings, and to draw conclusions. The meaning components of each synonymous verb are examined from their usages found in the *Sanseido Daijirin* dictionary.

3. Discussions

In the discussion section, the differences in usage frequency and the meaning components of these five synonymous Japanese verbs *GO* are being observed and discussed.

3.1 Differences in Frequency of Usage on Five Synonymous Verbs *GO*

First, the comparison of the frequency of usage of Japanese verbs taken from two different registers is shown, namely the Japanese written language variants, the Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese (BCCWJ) and the Japanese spoken language variants, Corpus of Spoken Japanese (CSJ). As of March 2019, the number of words in BCCWJ is 101,874,618 and in CSJ there are 7,605,602 words. Comparison of the frequency of usage of these verbs based on the variety of languages is as follows.

i.	赴く *omomuk-u*	*BCCWJ*	*869 / 101,874,618*
		CSJ	*10 / 7,605,602*
ii.	いらっしゃる *irasshar-u*	*BCCWJ*	*5,460 / 101,874,618*
		CSJ	*704 / 7,605,602*
iii.	参る *mair-u*	*BCCWJ*	*7,785 / 101,874,618*
		CSJ	*798 / 7,605,602*
iv.	帰る *kaer-u*	*BCCWJ*	*4,314 / 101,874,618*
		CSJ	*294 / 7,605,602*
v.	行く *ik-u*	*BCCWJ*	*127,795 / 101,874,618*
		CSJ	*25,965 / 7,605,602*

To be compared, the numbers must be normalized first. The figure shown in table 1 below is the number of usage or occurrence frequency normalized into millions of words (the average normalized frequency (per million)).

Table 1 Comparison of the Occurrence Frequency of Japanese Verbs *GO*

'go'	(BCCCWJ)	(CSJ)
Omomuku	8,5	1,3
Irassharu	54	93
Mairu	76	105
Kaeru	42	39
Iku	1.255	3.416

Based on the number of the occurrence frequency of synonymous verbs in table 3.1, there is a large variation in occurrence in both registers. *Iku* is the verb that appears most in both written and spoken registers. *Iku* occurred twice as many as in a variety of spoken languages compared to in the written language.

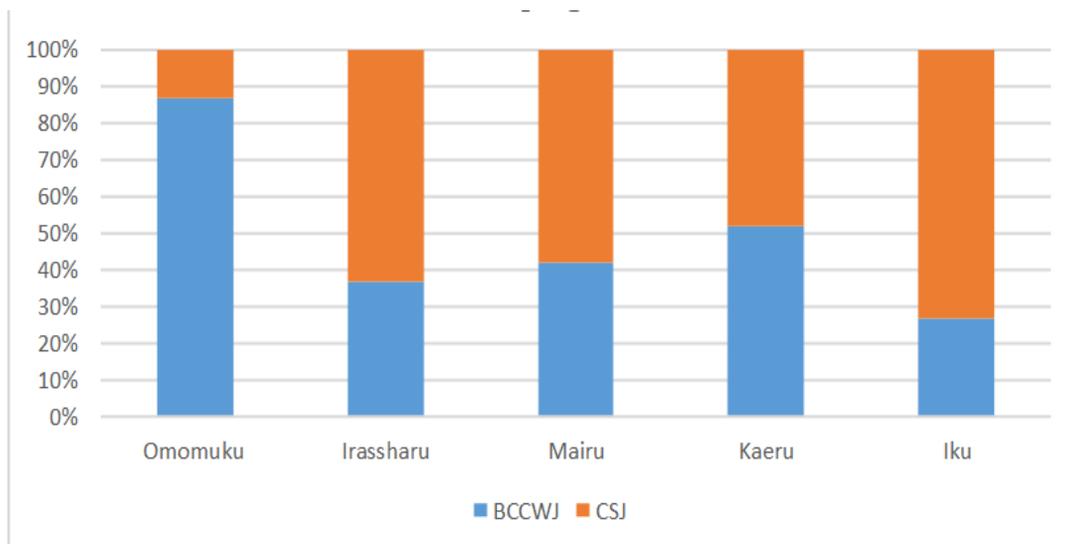For more details, a comparison chart can be made as follows.

Figure 1. Comparison Chart in Both Registers on Five Synonymous Verbs *GO*

3.2 Meaning Components on Five Synonymous Verbs *GO*

The meaning of each verb examined in this paper is examined in an online monolingual Japanese dictionary, namely *Sanseido Daijirin* (https://www.weblio.jp/content/). The followings are the meaning of each verb.

3.2.1 *omomuku* 赴く

In using modern Japanese, *omomuku* has two meanings, namely:

a. go somewhere (ある場所に向かって行く *aru basho ni mukatte iku*)
   Example: (1) *Kyouto ni omomuku*
   　　　　　　京都に赴く
   　　　　　　'going to Kyoto'
   　　Besides being able to use with a concrete place, *omomuku* can also be used to indicate the meaning of 'going to an abstract place'.
   Example: (2) *Ninchi e omomuku*
   　　　　　　任地へ赴く
   　　　　　　'going to one's place of work'
b. towards a situation (ある状態に向かう *aru joutai ni mukau*)
   Example: (3) *Byouki mo kaihou ni omomuku*
   　　　　　　病気も快方に赴く
   　　　　　　'getting better from illness'

3.2.2 *irassharu* いらっしゃる

irassharu is a form of respect (*keigo* 敬語) of the verbs *iku* 行く 'go', *kuru* 来る 'come', and *iru* 居る 'exists'. In Japanese, the form of respect is used to respect the speech partner and the person being discussed. In other words, *irassharu* is usually used with the subject of the second person or third person.
Example: 　　(4) *Sensei wa Rondon e irassharu*
　　　　　　　先生はロンドンへいらっしゃる

'teacher goes to London'

(5) *Kaisha kara kochira e irassharu*
会社からこちらへいらっしゃる
'coming here from the office'

(6) *Go-jitaku ni irassharu*
御自宅にいらっしゃる
'being at home'

3.2.3 *mairu*参る

Mairu has many meanings. Related to the meaning of 'go', the *mairu* verb is a form of degrading one's own actions (first person) when expressing *iku*行く 'go' and *kuru*来る 'come' to respect the speech partner. *Mairu* is also used to convey the meaning of 'pilgrimage'. In addition, this *mairu* verb can function as a *sondaigo* 尊大語 (utterances used to show the social strata of the speaker and his/her speech partner) when used by people who have higher social status to people with lower social status. In use with its function as *sondaigo*, the *mairu* verb is usually used in the form of an order, namely *maire* (see sample data (10) and (11)).

Example: (7) *Mata ashita ni-ji ni mairimasu*
また明日2時に参ります
'I will come again tomorrow at 2'

(8) *Hai, sugu sochira e mairimasu*
はい、すぐそちらへ参ります
'Okay, I will go there right away'

(9) *Bodaiji ni mairimasu*
菩提寺に参ります
'going in a pilgrimage to Bodaiji'

(10) *Washi wa ato kara iku kara omae wa saki ni maire*
わしはあとから行くからお前は先に参れ
'because I will go there later, you go first'

(11) *Hayaku kochira e maire*
早くこちらへ参れ
'come here quickly'

3.2.4 *kaeru*帰る

Kaeru has two meanings, namely:

a. *Hajimeni   ita   tokoro,   matawa   moto   ita   basho   ni modoru*初めにいたところ、またはもといた場所にもどる 'going back to original place'

Example: (12) *Go-ji ni wa kaettekuru*
五時には帰ってくる
'coming home at 5'

(13) *Kokoku ni kaeru*
故国に帰る
'going back to one's own country'

b. *Yatte kita hito ga soko o tachisaru*やってきた人がそこを立ち去る 'a person who came to a place is leaving that place'

Example:　　　(14) *Kyaku ga kaeru*
客が帰る
'the guest is leaving'

3.2.5 *iku*行く

Iku (yuku), like the *mairu* verb, has many meanings, both lexical meaning and metaphorical meaning such as (15) *Osaka e yome ni itta musume*大阪へ嫁に行った娘 'my daughter will get married in Osaka'. Regarding the meaning of 'go', *iku* has three meanings, namely:

a. *Hito, doubutsu, norimono ga hanashite no iru basho kara tooku e idou suru*人・動物・乗り物が話してのいる場所から遠くへ移動する　'humans,　animals, vehicles move away from the speaker'
Example:　　　(16) *Kore kara ginkou e iku*
これから銀行へ行く
'I will go to the bank now'

b. *Hito, doubutsu, norimono ga mokuteki no chiten ni mukatte susumu mata itaritsuku*人・動物・乗り物が目的の地点に向かって進むまた至りつく 'humans, animals, vehicles heading or moving towards the destination'
Example:　　　 (17) *Puuru ni oyogi ni iku*
プールに泳ぎに行く
'going for swimming in swimming pool'
(18) *Kyoto o mita ato Nara e iku*
京都を見たあと奈良へ行く
'going to Nara after seeing Kyoto'
(19) *Osaka kara Kyushu e iku ressha*
大阪から九州へ行く列車
'train that going to Kyushu from Osaka'

c. *Hito,　doubutsu　igai　no　mono　ga,　hakobarete　idou suru*人・動物以外の万尾が、運ばれて移動する 'objects other than humans and animals that are carried and moved'
Example:　　　(20) *Gaitousha ni wa yakusho kara tsuuchi ga iku hazu da*
該当者には役所から通知が行くはずだ
'to those concerned, a notification letter from the government office must be sent'

4. Novelties

This paper discussed not only the meaning components of the verbs, but also the usage in the corpus. Unlike previous studies which only emphasis on one of those two, this study combined the two so that more comprehensive understanding regarding the comparison among those synonymous verbs can be alerted.

5. Conclusion

Based on observations on the frequency of use and meaning components, the five synonymous verbs 'go' in Japanese show differences. It can be stated that these verbs cannot completely replace each other. There are limits to usage that require the presence of each of these verbs. Therefore, Japanese language learners must be careful in using these verbs so they can convey their intended meaning correctly to their speech partner.

6. Acknowledgements

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