

An Analysis of Nearly Synonymous Expressions: The Case of *Sekkaku* vs. *Wazawaza*

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Abstract:

This study presents a linguistic analysis of two nearly synonymous Japanese adverbs: *sekkaku* and *wazawaza*. *Sekkaku* and *wazawaza* roughly share the semantics of "with effort"; and the similarity between the two words sometimes causes difficulty for learners of Japanese in their uses.

Morita (1980) observed that *wazawaza* must involve intentional action, whereas *sekkaku* is free from the constraint. He also points out that the use of *wazawaza* toward self actions can be sometimes offensive because *wazawaza* contains the sense of one's burden or trouble and using *wazawaza* in expressing one's own act can be rude. As for *sekkaku*, Morita observed that it must involve both a situation action and its result. If the sentence only involves action, *wazawaza* must be used. Are these observations enough to account for the difference between the two expressions?

In this study, I will clarify the characterizations of *sekkaku* and *wazawaza* by examining in which cases only one form or the other can be used. I hope the sharper characterizations of these words make it easier for Japanese learners in their acquisition of these expressions.

This study provides a detailed semantic analysis of a nearly synonymous adverb pair, *sekkaku* and *wazawaza*. The semantic similarity between these two words (they both roughly mean 'with effort') often leads learners of Japanese to use the two forms indiscriminately in contexts where only one form or the other is appropriate. By clarifying the semantics of these words more sharply, I hope to assist learners of Japanese in acquiring a truer understanding of their usage.

Introduction

Sekkaku and *Wazawaza* roughly share the semantics of 'with effort':

- (1) a. **Sekkaku/Wazawaza** kita-n-da kara oisii mono o tabemasyoo.
 with.effort come.that is.Pr because good thing acc. eat.we.will
 (Since we have taken the trouble to come out here, let's eat something good.)
- b. **Sekkaku/*Wazawaza** desu kara arigataku tyoodai-itasimasu.
 with.effort is.Pr. because thankfully receive.Pr.
 (You have gone to all this trouble, so I am going to accept it with gratitude.)
 (Jorden, 1988)
- c. **Sekkaku/*Wazawaza** hareta-n-da kara, nani-ka siyoo ka?
 specially clear.Pt.that is.pr because something do.we.will Q
 (Since it is such a nice day, shall we do something outside?)

- d. ***Sekkaku/Wazawaza** ryoori o tukutte kureta.
 with.effort cooking acc. make.Cont. give.me.Past
 (S/he took the trouble of making dinner for me.)
- e. **Sekkaku/*Wazawaza** tikaku made kita-no-da kara yorimasita.
 with-effort near as.far.as come.Pt.that.is.Pr. because stop.by.Pt
 (Because I came all the way to your neighborhood, I dropped by.)
 (Makino & Tsutsui 1986)

As shown in (1b), *sekkaku* can be used pre-copularly, but *wazawaza* cannot. (1c) shows that *wazawaza* must involve intentional action, as observed by Morita (1980). Morita also points out that *sekkaku* must involve both a situation/action and its result. If the sentence only involves an action, *sekkaku* cannot be used though the use of *wazawaza* is appropriate. This explains the acceptability of the use of *wazawaza* and unacceptability of the use of *sekkaku* in (1d). Then, how do we account for the unacceptability of the use of *wazawaza* in (1c)? Why is *wazawaza* in (1a) acceptable, but not in (1c)? This study will try to elucidate the characterizations of *sekkaku* and *wazawaza* by examining in what contexts only one form or the other can be used.

Differences between *Sekkaku* and *Wazawaza*

As mentioned in the above examples (1b), *sekkaku* can be used pre-copularly, however, the use of *wazawaza* is unacceptable.

- (1). b. **Sekkaku/*Wazawaza** desu kara arigataku tyoodai-itasimasu.
 with.effort is.Pr. because thankfully receive.Pr.
 (You have gone to all this trouble, so I am going to accept it with gratitude.)
 (Jorden, 1988)

Observe also the following sentences:

- (2). **Sekkaku/*Wazawaza** desu ga, kyoo wa korede situce-simasu.
 kindly is.Pr. but today top. now excuse.Pr.
 (Thank you, but today, I am going home.)
- (3). **Sekkaku/*Wazawaza** no osaso desu ga, kyoo wa korede..
 with.effort of invitation is.Pr. but today top. now
 (Thank you for your invitation, but today, I am going home.)
- (4). **Sekkaku/*Wazawaza** no gotisoo-na-noni, onaka ga ippai-na-n-desu.
 with.effort of treat.but stomach nom. full.that.is.Pr.
 (It's such a feast, but I am very full.)

These examples show that *wazawaza* does not fit well when used pre-copularly (2), or pre-nominally (3 & 4). However, one might come up with a few counterexamples such as the following.

- (5). **Wazawaza** no oide o itadaki, arigatoo-gozaïmasita.
with.effort of coming acc. receive thank.you.Past
(Thank you for taking the trouble of coming here.)
- (6). **Wazawaza** no go-raïten, makoto-ni arigatoo-gozaïmasu.
with.effort of visiting really thank.you.Pr.
(Thank you for taking the trouble of coming to our store.)

Notice that both nouns in (5) and (6) refer to the hearer's activity: *oide*, and *go-raïten*. The acceptability of these sentences shows that *wazawaza* can be used pre-nominally when it is combined with nouns denoting action.

Let us next consider the example (1c).

- (1) c. **Sekkaku/*Wazawaza** hareta-n-da kara, nani-ka siyoo ka?
specially clear.Pt.that.is.Pr because something do.we.will Q
(Since it is such a nice day, shall we do something outside?)

Observe also the following sentences:

- (7). **Sekkaku/*Wazawaza** sainoo ga aru-n-da kara, tudukeru beki da.
specially talent nom. have.that.is.Pr because continue.Pr. must is.Pr.
(Since you are very talented, you should continue.)
- (8). **Sekkaku /*Wazawaza** siken ni ukatta noni daigaku ni ikanai rasii.
with.effort test dat. pass.Pt but college to go.Neg.Pr. I.hear
(I hear that he is not going to college even though he was able to pass the exam.)
- (9). **Sekkaku/*Wazawaza** kataduite iru-no-da kara, okyaku-san o yoboo.
specially clean.Ct. is.that.is.Pr. because visitor acc. invite.we.will
(Since it's tidy now, let's invite people over.)

The unacceptability of *wazawaza* sentences in the above examples supports Morita (1980)'s observation: *Wazawaza* cannot be used with a non-volitional situation. Morita further examines this notion syntactically:

- (10). a. [[**Sekkaku** hiete iru juice] o atatamete] nomu nante bakana hanasi da.
Specially cold.Ct. is.Pr. juice acc. warm.Ct. drink.Pr. how silly story is.Pr.
(Morita, 1980)
(It's silly that he warms up juice that is nice and cold.)
- a' * [**Sekkaku** [hiete iru juice] o atatamete] nomu nante bakana hanasi da.
specially cold.Ct. is.Pr. juice acc. warm.Ct. drink.Pr. how silly story is.Pr.
(It's silly that he takes the trouble to warm up cold juice.)

- b. [Wazawaza [hiete iru juice] o atatamete] nomu nante bakana hanasi da.
with.effort cold.Ct. is.Pr. juice acc. warm.Ct. drink.Pr. how silly story is.Pr.
(Morita, 1980)
(It's silly that he takes the trouble to warm up cold juice.)
- b'. *[[Wazawaza hiete iru juice] o atatamete] nomu nante bakana hanasi da.
with.effort cold.Ct. is.Pr. juice acc. warm.Ct. drink.Pr. how silly story is.Pr.
(It's silly that he warms up juice that is nice and cold.)

Example (10) provides the structural differences between *sekkaku* and *wazawaza*. Morita states that *sekkaku* shows connectivity with non-volitional *hiete iru*; while *wazawaza* shows connectivity with volitional *atatamete*. Therefore, *wazawaza* must be used with a volitional act. Other similar examples are as follows.

- (11). a. [[**Sekkaku** kuuraa ga kiita hey] no mado] o aketa.]
specially AC nom. work.Pt room of window acc. open.Pt
(I opened the window of the room that is nicely air-conditioned.)
- a'. *[[**Sekkaku** [kuuraa ga kiita hey] no mado] o aketa.]
specially AC nom. work.Pt room of window acc. open.Pt
(I took the trouble to open the window of the room that is air-conditioned.)
- b. [**Wazawaza** [kuuraa ga kiita hey] no mado] o aketa.]
with.effort AC nom. work.Pt room of window acc. open.Pt
(I took the trouble to open the window of the room that is air-conditioned.)
- b'. *[[**Wazawaza** kuuraa ga kiita hey] no mado] o aketa.]
with.effort AC nom. work.Pt room of window acc. open.Pt
(I opened the window of the room that is nicely air-conditioned.)
- (12). a. [[**Sekkaku** katta bakari no jeans] o yogosite haite iru].
specially buy.Pt just of jeans acc. stain.Cont. wear.Ct. is.Pr.
(I stained my nice new pants and I wear them.)
- a'. *[[**Sekkaku** [katta bakari no jeans] o yogosite haite iru].
specially buy.Pt just of jeans acc. stain.Cont. wear.Ct. is.Pr.
(I took the trouble of staining my new pants and I wear them.)
- b. [**Wazawaza** [katta bakari no jeans] o yogosite haite iru].
with.effort buy.Pt just of jeans acc. stain.Cont. wear.Ct. is.Pr.
(I took the trouble of staining my new pants and I wear them.)
- b'. *[[**Wazawaza** katta bakari no jeans] o yogosite haite iru].
with.effort buy.Pt just of jeans acc. stain.Cont. wear.Ct. is.Pr.
(I stained my nice new pants and I wear them.)

If we take a close look at (12a), it is clear that *sekkaku* shows connectivity with volitional *katta* contrary to Morita's claim. Thus, the acceptability in the use of *sekkaku* has nothing

to do with volition although it plays an important role in the use of *wazawaza*.

Now, let us move on to the differences in (1d).

- (1). d. ***Sekkaku/Wazawaza** ryoori o tukutte kureta.
 with.effort cooking acc. make.Cont. give.me.Past
 (S/he took the trouble of making dinner for me.)

Morita (1980) points out that *wazawaza* can be used in a sentence that involves only an action, but that a *sekkaku* sentence must have both a situation/action and its result.

Consider the following sentences:

- (13). Watasi no tame-ni ***sekkaku/wazawaza** katte kite kureta.
 I of for with.effort buy.Ct. come.Ct give.me.Pt
 (S/he took the trouble to buy it for me.)
- (14). ***Sekkaku/Wazawaza** toomawari suru hituyoo wa nai yo.
 with.effort detour do.Pr. necessity top. have.Neg.Pr. sp.
 (We do not have to make a detour.)

These examples support Morita's assumption as discussed above. Now, let us observe the following sentences:

- (15). Kore, **sekkaku/wazawaza** kare no tame-ni katte kita no yo!
 this with.effort he of for buy.Ct. come.Pt that sp.
 (I took the trouble to buy this for him!)

The acceptability of (15) seems to be a counterexample of Morita's assumption. However, if we consider the context in which this sentence might be used, (15) implies the following sentences as its result:

- (15). a'. Dakara tukau beki yo ne.
 so use.Pr. must sp. sp.
 (So he should use it, right?)
- a''. Nanoni tukatte kurenai no yo.
 but use.Ct. give.me.Neg.Pr. that sp.
 (But he does not care to read it.)

Therefore, (15) can be considered to have the following structure.

- (15). a'''. Kore **sekkaku** kare no tame-ni katte kita kara, tsukau beki yo.
 this with.effort he of for buy.Ct come.Pt. because use.Pr. must sp.
 (I took the trouble to buy this, so he should use it.)
- a'''. Kore **sekkaku** kare no tame-ni katte kita noni, tukatte kurenai.
 this with.effort he of for buy.Ct come.Pt but use.Ct. give.me.Ng.
 (I took the trouble to buy this, but he does not care to use it.)

Thus, we can assume that (15) is still compatible with Morita's observation.

Now consider the following sentences:

- (16). Syatyyoo ga ***sekkaku/wazawaza** irassyatta node, minna komatta.
 president nom. with.effort come-Pt because everyone have.trouble.Pt
 (The company president took the trouble to show up, so everyone felt troubled.)
- (17). ***Sekkaku/Wazawaza** sensee ga nasatta node, kyoosyuku-sita.
 with.effort teacher nom. do.Pt because feel.sorry.Past
 (The teacher took the trouble to do it, so I felt awkward.)

In these examples, *sekkaku* cannot be used although the sentences contain an action and its results. How do we account for their unacceptability? Compare these sentences with the following:

- (16)'. Syatyyoo ga **sekkaku** irassyatta node, ganbarimasita.
 President nom. with.effort come-Past because work.hard.Past
 (Since the company president took the trouble to show up, we made an extra effort to work hard.)
- (17)'. **Sekkaku** sensee ga nasatta node. haiken simasita.
 with.effort teacher nom. do.Past because look do.Past
 (Since the teacher took the trouble to do it, we humbly looked at it.)

The difference between (16, 17) and (16' 17') seems to be the context in which *sekkaku* is used. In the latter situations, an extraordinary occasion 'syatyyoo ga irassyaru (the company president shows up)', or 'sensee ga nasaru (the teacher does something)' occurs and invites an expected result 'ganbaru (put extra effort), or 'haiken suru (humbly take a look). In the former situations (16, 17), however, an extraordinary occasion is not rewarded by the expected result, rather, is greeted by an unexpected result. In other words, when a sequential conjunction, such as "node, or kara, (therefore)" is used, the result should contain an action, will, hope, or obligation which meets the expectation (15a'', 16' & 17'). On the other hand, when a contrary conjunction, such as "noni, or kedo, (but)" is used, the result should be a disappointing one, not meeting the expectation. (15a''').

(18). An Observation on the use of sekkaku:

A *sekkaku* sentence must contain an extraordinary action/situation that one expects to make use of, and its result. When followed by a sequential conjunction, the expected result must be presented. When followed by a contrary conjunction, the result should indicate a failure in regards to the expectation.

Finally, let us discuss the acceptability of the use of *sekkaku* and the unacceptability of the use of *wazawaza* in (1c).

- (1) c. **Sekkaku/*Wazawaza** tikaku made kita-no-da kara yorimasita.
 with.effort near as.far.as come.Pt.that.is.Pr. because stop.by.Pt
 (Because I came all the way to your neighborhood, I dropped by.)
 (Makino & Tsutsui 1986)

Morita (1980) points out that the use of *wazawaza* toward self-actions can be sometimes offensive, such as these:

- (19). a *Sensee, watasi wa **wazawaza** kita no desu.
 teacher I top. with.effort come.Pt that is.Pr.
 (Teacher, I took the trouble to come here.)
 (Morita 1980)
- b. *Otaku e wa **wazawaza** ukagawanakute mo ii desuyoo?
 your.house to top. with.effort visit.Neg.Cont. also good is.probably
 (I do not have to take the trouble to visit you, right?)
 (Morita 1980)

Morita explains that these sentences are unacceptable because *wazawaza* contains the sense of one's burden or trouble and using *wazawaza* in describing one's own action involving a person deserving deference can be rude. Thus, we can apply the same notion in explaining the unacceptability in (1c). The use of *wazawaza* in (1c) implies the speaker took the trouble to arrive at the neighborhood of the addressee; and therefore, s/he stopped by to visit the addressee, which can be construed as being rude unless the speaker is joking; thus it is unacceptable. On the other hand, *sekkaku* does not have such an implication. *Sekkaku* provides the notion of an extraordinary occasion which one expects to make use of. The use of *sekkaku* in (1c) means that the speaker does not come this way often and it is a rare chance for him/her to visit the addressee; thus, s/he did so.

Summary

This paper examined the characteristics of *sekkaku* and *wazawaza* and I have arrived at the following generalizations:

- Sekkaku:** It is used to express an extraordinary occasion that has just occurred and one expects to make use of. The sentence must contain a result. When it is used with a sequential conjunction, the result must come through as expected. When used with a contrary conjunction, the

result regretfully different from expectations.

Wazawaza:

It implies that one intentionally makes an effort, thus it can not be used with a non-volitional situation. It cannot be used as pre-copularly, or pre-nominally except with a noun denoting action. Since it refers to one's own efforts, it can be offensive and viewed as an expression of one's inconvenience.

Conclusion

This paper provided an analysis of the subtle semantic and pragmatic differences between closely related adverbs, *sekkaku* and *wazawaza*. To advance beyond the beginning level of Japanese, learners must master these subtleties. I hope this study will be helpful for learners in acquiring these two expressions as well as for Japanese teachers in explaining the subtleties in their classrooms.

References

Morita (1980) *Kiso Nihongo 1 & 2* Kadokawa: Tokyo.