Dramatizing Mystery Crime Stories Through Wordplay: Exploring the Japanese Puzzle Game 'Nazonazo' Features in the Animated Film Detective Conan

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Abstract

This study explores the wordplay feature in the Japaneze puzzle game 'nazonazo', used in the animated film Detective Conan to dramatize the mystery crimes. *Nazonazo* is a form of wordplay involving question-and-answer riddles, typically used as a mental exercise and commonly referred to as puzzles or guessing games. This study aims to identify the types of games and describe the formation of *nazonazo* in the animated film Detective Conan. The research method used is descriptive qualitative. The research results show that *nazonazo* answers in Detective Conan's animated film are classified into 4 (four) types, namely (1) *dajare*, which involve wordplay; (2) *goroawase*, which involve converting numbers into words; (3) anagrams, which involve arranging a word, and (4) other types of answers based on the reference of the question.

Keywords: *wordplay; nazonazo; puzzles; animated films; Detective Conan*

INTRODUCTION

Humans are naturally inclined to socialize and communicate using language to convey their thoughts and ideas. Language-based games, such as wordplay, provide an enjoyable and effective means of fostering communication. Additionally, these games can be a useful tool for improving vocabulary, especially when learning a new language. They are generally easy to grasp, as they make use of linguistic nuances like homonyms and homophone (Dybala, Rzepka, Araki, & Sayama, 2012).

Wordplay is a widely used feature among humans as a medium for humor, memory recall, or promotional purposes. However, nowadays, the use of wordplay has become increasingly diverse. For instance, in the animated film *Detective Conan*, which belongs to the mystery and crime genre, the wordplay is used to dramatize the story. The wordplay is used in the form of Japanese puzzle game '*nazonazo*'. In common, *nazonazo* is also known as a guessing game, where one person poses a question, and others attempt to answer it. Sometimes, *nazonazo* can be challenging to answer, which is why the questioner often provides clues to facilitate finding the answer (Widianto, 2020).

Initially, the term 'wordplay' was widely known as a form of riddles, but it later developed into a tool for fostering verbal creativity in individuals, with the aim of demonstrating intelligence, sharpness, concentration, and testing mental abilities (Orlova, 2017). In line with those ideas, Maranda and Levin in Orlova (2017) also considers riddles as a structural unit that always consists of two components: a question and an answer. These scholars support the idea that the structure of riddles can vary in complexity and can be categorized into simple riddles, complex riddles, and chain riddles.

Based on the abovementioned introduction, this study focuses on the types of wordplay used in *nazonazo* and the process of their formation, which are considered as riddles consisting of questions and answers. The answers in these *nazonazo* contain wordplay intended to demonstrate the intelligence, sharpness, concentration, and mental ability of the character 'Conan' in the animated film *Detective Conan* as the data source.

Research on wordplay has been previously conducted by Zakiyyah (2014) in a study tittled "*Analisis Kontrastif Permainan Kata dalam Bahasa Jepang dan Bahasa Indonesia*" (A Constrastive Analysis of Wordplay in Japanese and Indonesian). Zakiyyah's research focused on comparing wordplay in Indonesian and Japanese, including puns, riddles, *dajare*, and *nazonazo*. The data for the study were collected from internet sites and humorous comics (*gyagu manga*).   Similarly, Tresnasari (2017) conducted study on "*Pola Pembentukan Goroawase dalam Bahasa Jepang*" (The Formation Patterns of *Goroawase* in Japanese). In this research, *goroawase* is frequently used as a mnemonic device (a method for memorization) and a promotional tool, utilizing the sounds of numbers arranged to form meaningful words, phrases, or sentences that refer to a specific concept.

Another previous study on wordplay was conducted by Tresnasari (2019) titled "*Dajare dalam Nama Produk Iklan Makanan dan Minuman Jepang*" (*Dajare* in the Product Names of Japanese Food and Beverage Advertisements), which explores the use of *dajare* (wordplay) in Japanese as a promotional tool through copywriting techniques in food and beverage products. In her research, *dajare* is classified into two types: paradigmatic *dajare* and syntagmatic *dajare*.

Nazonazo is a distinctive feature that showcases Conan's intelligence and sharpness, appearing in almost every episode of the *Detective Conan* animated series. Although the answers are provided, non-native Japanese speakers often struggle to grasp the meaning of these *nazonazo*. Based on this observation, the author chose to conduct research on *nazonazo* to explain the forms and unique aspects of the wordplay used as answers in these riddles. Additionally, research on *nazonazo* in the Indonesian language is still limited. These factors are what led to the selection of this research topic.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Wordplay in Japanese is known as *kotoba asobi*. *Kotoba asobi* takes many forms, such as *nazonazo*, *dajare*, *goroawase*, *shiritori*, *hayaguchi kotoba*, and others. According to Matsumura et al. (2020), *kotoba asobi* refers to games that play with pronunciation and meaning within a language. One type of wordplay commonly encountered in everyday life is *nazonazo*. As noted by Saeki (2021) in Bagianto (2022), is similar to a quiz, but while quiz answers are factual, *nazonazo* answers are based on wordplay, involving word associations, metaphors, substitutions, or puns. *Nazonazo* is similar to riddles in Indonesian, where one person poses a question and another tries to answer it (Widianto, 2020).

Based on the research data collected, *nazonazo* answers take various forms, including *dajare*, *goroawase*, anagrams, and other types, presented in an engaging and entertaining manner. Hayashi (1989) in Tresnasari (2019), states that the term *dajare* (駄洒落) is derived from the word *da* (駄), meaning 'bad,' and *share* (洒落), meaning 'joke'; thus, *dajare*literally translates to 'bad joke'. In Indonesian, *dajare* is more commonly known as a pun.

Meanwhile, regarding the form of *goroawase*, Matsumura et al. (2020) explain that *goroawase* is a language game in which the tone and sound of a word are manipulated to resemble a proverb or expression, creating a humorous sentence with a different meaning. For example, the proverb *neko ni koban* (猫に小判), which means 'to give a gold coin to a cat', is transformed into *geko ni gohan* (下戸にご飯), meaning 'to give rice to someone who cannot drink'.

The formation patterns of *goroawase* are typically related to the numerical system in the Japanese language. Izuru (1998) as cited in Tresnasari (2017) categorizes Japanese numerals into two types: Japanese numerals, which are pronounced using the native Japanese reading (*kunyomi*), and Chinese numerals, which are pronounced according to the Chinese reading adapted to Japanese phonetics. Additionally, Schourup (2000) identifies that in *goroawase*, number readings can also derive from transliterations of English (*eigo yomikata*).

In addition to *goroawase*, another form found in the answers to *nazonazo* is the anagram. Collins (2022) describes the term 'anagram' as a word or phrase that can be rearranged to form a new word or phrase. An anagram is a type of wordplay that involves reorganizing the letters of a word or phrase to create a new word or phrase, using all the original letters. Similar to typical riddles with unexpected answers, the characters' responses when the answers are revealed are often not laughter but rather expressions of annoyance and frustration.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. The descriptive method is used to outline the process of forming answers from *nazonazo* found in the animated film *Detective Conan*. Data were collected using the observation method with a non-participant listening technique, where the author did not engage in conversations but merely listened to the dialogues spoken by the characters in *Detective Conan*. These dialogues were then recorded, scripted, and classified based on their forms of wordplay. A total of 24 instances of *nazonazo* were identified across 24 videos, with each video containing a single *nazonazo*. The data sources were accessed through a subscription-based streaming service website, CATCHPLAY+ (www.catchplay.com). The data analysis method used in this study is the referential matching method, chosen because the forms of wordplay found are referenced against established definitions. The results of the data analysis are presented informally, using everyday language. Furthermore, the data presentation technique employed is sampling, meaning that only representative data from the entire dataset is discussed. The displayed data serve as representatives for each classification of the wordplay forms identified

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results show that *nazonazo* answers in Detective Conan's animated film are classified into four types, namely (1) *dajare*, which involve wordplay; (2) *goroawase*, which involve converting numbers into words; (3) anagrams, which involve arranging a word, and (4) other types of answers based on the reference of the question. Furthermore, the analysis is as written as below.

1. *Dajare* Form

Data (1)

Question   : ワシには多くの孫がいる。ズバリ、何歳かな？
             Washi ni wa ooku no mago ga iru. Zubari, nan sai ka na?
             'I (*washi*) have many grandchildreen (*mago*). I wonder how old are they?'

Answer   : 0 歳。
             Zero-sai
             '0 tahun'

<div align="right">(Detective Conan: The Last Wizard of the Century)</div>

Context:

The junior detective group is upset because Conan went to Osaka, leaving them behind. To cheer them up, Professor Agasa offers them some watermelon. However, they must answer this riddle first.

The riddle presented in Data 1 above is categorized as *dajare* (pun) which use homonyms to draw the answers. The sentence "*washi niwa ookuno mago ga iru*" consists of the word "*washi*" and the phrase "*ookuno mago*" (多くの孫). In Japanese, sound "*washi*" can refer to the word *washi* (ワシ) which means 'I' (for the elderly) and the word *washi* (鷲) which means 'eagle'. Meanwhile, the phrase 多くの孫 (*ookuno mago*/'many grandchildren') comprises the kanji 多 (ta/'many') and 孫 (*mago*/'grandchild') with which the form is '*tamago*' when only reading the kanji. In Japanese, "*tamago*" means 'egg.' Therefore, the sentence "*washi niwa ookuno mago ga iru*," meaning 'I have many grandchildren,' can also be homonymous with "*washi niwa tamago ga iru*," which means '*the eagle has eggs*.' In a broader context, eggs are considered embryos, categorizing them as being 0 years old or 0 歳 (*zerosai*). Here is the concept for understanding nazonazo type *dajare*.

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ワシ     には        多くの孫        がいる。
washi    niwa     ookuno mago    ga iru
I                many grandchildren  have
                        ⇩
                  多孫➔tamago
     ⇩                  ⇩
     鷲     には         卵         がいる。
washi    niwa       tamago       ga iru
eagle                egg          has
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2. *Goroawase* Form

Data (2)

Question   : 灰原さんに「コナン君ってどんな人だと思う？」って聞いたら、月を見ながら「夏じゃない」って答えたの。灰原さんは…1・コナン君を褒めた。2・コナン君を貶した。さあ、どちらでしょう？

Haibara-san ni Konan-kun tte "donna hito dato omou?" tte kiitara, tsuki wo minagara "natsu jya nai" tte kotaeta no. Haibara-san wa… Ichi, Konan-kun wo hometa. Ni, Konan-kun wo kenashita. Saa, dochira deshou?
'When Haibara asked Conan, "What kind of person do you think I am?" while looking at the moon, he replied, "It's not summer". So, Haibara... first praised Conan, then dismissed him. Now, which one is it?'

Answer   : ２・コナン君を貶した
Ni, Konan-kun wo kenashita
'Two, he dismissed Conan'.

(*Detective Conan: Captured in HerEyes*)

Context: Genta, Mitsuhiko, and Ayumi created a riddle specifically for Conan.

In Data (2), the answer to number two is derived from the fact that summer (夏; natsu) occurs in June (month 6), July (month 7), and August (month 8). The word "*natsu*" is then replaced with the phonetic sounds of the numbers representing the months of summer in Japan, which are 6, 7, and 8. The number 6 is pronounced as "*roku*" in *onyomi* (Chinese reading), the number 7 is pronounced as "*na*" in *kunyomi* (Japanese reading), and the number 8 is pronounced as "*yatsu*" in *kunyomi*. When combined with the phrase "*jya nai*", it becomes "*roku-na yatsu jya nai*" (ろくなヤツじゃない; meaning "*he's not a good person*"). Thus, Haibara is essentially criticizing Conan. This type of answer is a form of wordplay known as *goroawase*, which constructs a sentence using the phonetic readings of numbers in Japanese to convey meaning.

夏	→	6	7	8	
		Roku	*Shichi*	*Hachi*	音
		Mu	*Nana*	*Yatsu*	訓
		rokunayatsu			

3. Anagram Form

Data (3)

Question   : スナイパーが得意なスポーツは次のうちのどれ？１・野球。２・サッカー。３・ゴルフ。
Sunaipaa ga tokui-na supootsu wa tsugi no uchi no dore? Ichi yakyu. Ni, sakkaa. San, gorufu.
'Which of the following sports is the sniper good at? First, baseball. second, football. Third, golf.'

Answer   : ３・ゴルフ。
San, gorufu
'Third, golf'

(*DC: Dimensional Sniper*)

Context:
The answer to Professor Agasa's riddle related to the sniper received a negative response from the junior detective group because it was illogical. Then, Ai followed up by giving another riddle.

In the data (3) above, the answer for option number 3 was obtained by rearranging the word スナイパー (*sunaipaa*), which means 'sniper', into ナイスパー (*naisu paa*). In English, '*nice par*' is a term used in golf. This process of creating the *nazonazo* answer is an example of an anagram wordplay

4. *Other Form of Nazonazo*

Data (4)

Question   ：４４歳は何というかわかるかな？ヒントは漢字１文字にカタカナ
            ３文字じゃ。
            Yonjyuuyon-sai wa nan to iu ka wakaru ka na? Hinto wa kanji hito-moji ni katakana san-moji jya.
            'I wonder if you know what '44 years old' is? The hint is one kanji character and three katakana characters'

Answer   ：半ライス
            Han-raisu
            'Half rice.'

(*Detective Conan: Countdown to Heaven*)

Context:

While camping, the junior detective group and Professor Agasa had a discussion. In Japan, the age of 77 is called *kijyu* (喜寿; 'age of happiness' or 77th birthday), the age of 88 is called *beijyu* (米寿; 'age of rice' or 88th birthday), and the age of 99 is called *hakujyu* (白寿; 'white age' or 99th birthday). Based on this context, Professor Agasa presented a riddle to the junior detective group

Data 4 in the riddle above falls into a different type of riddle format. According to the previously mentioned context, the age of 88 in Japanese is also called '*beijyu*'(米寿), which means 'age of rice'. The word 'rice' in English translates to 'raisu' when integrated into Japanese. Meanwhile, 44 years is half of 88 years. The word 'half' in Japanese is '*han*'. Thus, the term for 44 years old is half the age of rice, or '*hanraisu*', which is written in Japanese using one kanji character, 半 (*han*), and three katakana characters, ライス (*raisu*)

1/2	from	88	→	44
han		*beiju*→		*hanraisu*
		raisu		
半		ライス		半ライス

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, the wordplay used in the nazonazo answers consists of 4 (four) forms, including *dajare, goroawase*, anagrams, and other types. Meanwhile, this study's processes for forming the *nazonazo* answers are diverse. For answers in the form of dajare, the formation process involves playing with a word until it becomes a pun or phrase. For answers in the form of goroawase, the process is obtained by converting

numbers into words and matching tones. For anagram answers, the process involves rearranging a word. As for the other forms, the answer formation process includes:
    a. finding similarities from the provided data;
    b. translating a word into another language;
    c. finding answers by knowing a recipe for a specific dish;
    d. understanding the content of a food item;
    e. playing with a series of letters.

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