

The Use of Japanese Adverb [ikura]

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Abstract: Japanese language has so much uniqueness in its characters, especially when it comes to similar words. One of those words is [ikura] as known as a question word to express ‘how much’ or ‘no matter how much’ in English. The word is used to be written as 幾ら (ikura) but nowadays it is not necessary to write it in Kanji (Chinese character), but just **written** by Hiragana. For Japanese learners, it is sometimes confusing how to divide the meaning and the use of [ikura] comparing to other word like [donna ni] when it is followed by auxiliary -temo. Both are remarkably similar but surely have different meanings. This research is to study the use and the meaning of Japanese [ikura], and thus compared to [donna ni]. By conducting the observation on those meanings, we will know the differences between the two words so that Japanese learners will be able to know the correct use of these expressions.

Keywords: ikura, use, donna ni

1. Introduction

Japanese language is very well-known for its uniqueness. A word can be used in some classification, and even with different meaning and use. However, for Japanese learners, especially foreigners, sometimes it is difficult to define the use and the meaning of some words that have similarities. One of those words is [ikura]. This word already existed in Ancient Era. It has also similarity with *donna ni*, that makes Japanese learners often confused. Therefore, this research is to study the difference between the two words, which will be explained by the literature studies and some real examples in sentences.

2. Research Methods

This research is using qualitative method. The meaning of [ikura] will be defined by literature studies, analyzed by the point of view of its meaning which is written in some dictionaries. Some examples will be compiled based on the definition to ensure the use of this word in Present Era. Thus, the meaning and the use of [donna ni] will be explained in order to know the differences between these two expressions.

The Definition of [ikura] in Dictionaries

The definition of [ikura] is written in the dictionaries as follows.

1. Benesse

(Noun) (1) To indicate the intention when asking amount and time. Also, when the amount is unclear. “How much would you buy?” “On the other hand, it costs 10.000 just for the transportation.” (2) The form [ikurademo] means no matter how much the amount or quantity is. “There is no limit to the time.”

(Adverb) The form [No matter how much...Even/but] (1) ...even if it works strongly. [No matter how much I

say]. Similar with: dorehodo. Donna ni. (2) [...even if there are conditions of ...] “I want you to apologize no matter it is unintentional matter” “No matter how much children are allowed”. Similar: Tatoe.

2. Daijirin

(Noun) (1) Used when asking for price and quantity. How much. “How much is one apple?” (2) Used when showing something without specifying the quantity and price. “Price around 10.000 clothes”

(Adverb) (1) donna ni. dorehodo. “Have you search that much until now?” (2) followed by (temo/demo) Tatoe donna ni. No matter how much. “It doesn’t get easier eventhough how much I work.”

3. Meikyou

(Noun) Usually followed by question particle “ka” as below. Also used as an adverb. A word that asks for quantity, especially price. How much. “How much do you think this note’s price?” It is also used in the sentence of “How much is your weight?”, however it is more common in the question of price. (2) Form [ni mo naranai] The amount is so small that is not necessary anymore to count in. Only a few. “Even if you sell it, it won’t be that much” (3) For unlimited number. This indicates a negative fraction (especially amount of money). Ikuraka. “I have only a thousand or more money left(Pita & Dhurup, 2019).

(Adverb) (1) followed by -temo/demo. It indicates the intention to consider quantity or degree of excellence. No matter how. “Even children can understand the goodness of things.” (2) With the form [ikura...temo/demo ii] is to express an acceptable meaning without being particular about the quantity. Contextually, it means more or less. “Even the quality is good, you can put it out.”

4. Shinmeikai

(Noun) To indicate that the numerical value (a result of calculation or measurement) is not limited. Mostly about money. (Can be used also to ask the price). “How much does it cost to buy in a bulk?” But also (many). He is no different in age.

(Adverb) A condition where a degree of things is expressed without limitation. It is used to assume an extreme state with many “even” and “but”. “~Even a genius cannot do what he can’t do”.

The Use of [ikura] based on Nihongo Bunkei Jiten:

a Ikura<Question>

この本はいくらですか。

Kono hon ha ikura desuka.

Use to indicate that the price is unclear, and to ask the price.

b Ikura<Denial>

いくらなら案内してもらってもいいとこちらから先に提示した。

Ikura nara annai shite morattemo iito kochira kara saki ni teiji shita.

Use to indicate the price or quantity is indefinite, and is used when the value can not be stated clearly or when it is not necessary to say.

1 Ikurademo

ビールならまだいくらでもあるから、安心して飲んでください。

Biru nara mada ikura demo arukara, anshin shitenonde kudasai.

To indicate an endless condition. It means [if you wish, you only wish]

2 Ikurademo~nai

バスがでるまで時間はもういくらもない。

Basu ga deru made jikan wa mou ikuramo nai.

It means that the quantity is very small.

3 Ikura~temo

a Ikura V-temo

いくら練習してうまくならない。

Ikura renshuu shite umaku naranai.

“No matter how many/many times/hard doing something.” This is to emphasize the degree.

b Ikura~to ittemo

「ikura N a da to ittemo」

「ikura A-I to ittemo」

いくら給料がいいと言っても、残業がそんなに多いのでは就職するのはいやだ。

Ikura kyuuryou ga ii to ittemo, zangyou ga sonna ni ooi nodewa shuushoku suruno wa iyada.

It means “I admit something, but it still...” Emphasize the latter part and insist.

c Ikura...kara to itte (mo)

いくら淋しいからと言って、夜中の3時に友達に電話するなんて非常識だ。

Ikura samishii kara to itte, yonaka no 3-ji ni tomodachi ni denwa suru nante hijyoushiki da.

“No matter how much X you say (also)”, it expresses a slight criticism that “I think you would conclude that it is Y because it is X, but that is strange. Later it is accompanied by a counterargument to Y. For example, (1) X: lonely. So, Y: “Call a friend in the middle of the night is insane.”

d Ikura...kara to ittemo

いくら才能がないからと言っても、10年もピアノをやっていたら簡単な伴奏ぐらいはできるだろう。

Ikura tensai ga naikara to ittemo, 10nen mo piano wo yatte ireba kantan na bannsou gurai wa dekiru darou.

e Ikura nandemo

そういう言い方はいくらなんでもひどすぎるよ。

Sou iu iikata wa ikura nandemo hidousugiru yo.

Adverb idiom. Often used with “...too.” It expresses a feeling of criticism such as “It is still strange/unusual/beyond the scope of common sense even if various circumstances are taken into consideration.”

4 Ikura V-ta tokoro de

いくら頑張ってみたところで結果的には同じことだ。

Ikura ganbatte mita tokoro de kekka teki ni wa onaji koto da.

Words such as “It’s the same/It can’t be helped/It’s useless” come afterword, and mean “No matter how hard you try... the state doesn’t change” “It’s useless to do that kind of thing.”

2 The Examples of [ikura] and [donna ni]

To know the differences between [ikura] and [donna ni], we could see from the daily use sentences as below.

妻の死後、塾の借金や自分のギャラがいくらだったのかを初めて知った。

Tsuma no shigo, juku no shakkin ya jibun no gyara ga ikuradatta no ka o hajimeteshitta.

After my wife's death, I learned for the first time how much my cram school debt and my guarantee were.

阪神地域の回答者の47%が「退職金のいくらかを投資商品に振り向けた」と答え、全国平均の39%を上回った。

Hanshin chiiki no kaitōsha no 47-pāsento ga `taishokukin no ikura ka o tōshi shōhin ni furimuketa' to kotae, zenkoku heikin no 39-pāsento o uwamawatta.

Forty-seven percent of respondents in the Hanshin area said they "allocated some of their retirement allowances to investment products," exceeding the national average of 39%.

でも本当は、言いたいことのいくらも伝えられなかった。

Demo hontōha, iitai koto no ikura mo tsutae rarenakatta.

But the truth is, I could not convey much of what I wanted to say.

いったん良くなったんですけれども、31歳のころ、いくらなんでも変だなんていうくらいやせてきた。

Ittan yoku natta ndesukeredomo, 31-sai no koro, ikura nan demo henda natte iu kurai yasete kita.

Once I got better, when I was 31 years old. I was so down that I could not do anything strange.

どんなに努力したって、ちゃんと上司に伝わらなければ評価はあがらないんだよね。

Donna ni doryoku shitatte, chanto jyoushi ni tsutawaranakereba hyouka wa agaranain dayone.

Pti No matter how hard I try, what really matters for a good evaluation is whether the efforts that I make are actually recognized by my boss.

どんなに汚れたお皿でもピカピカになる。

Donna ni yogoreta osara demo pikapika ni naru.

No matter how dirty the plate is, it will be shiny.

どんなに小さな病気でも、どんなに小さな苦しみでも、誰よりも先にその動物の心を理解し、最大限の治療にあたります。

Donna ni chiisana byouki demo, donna ni chiisana kurushimi demo, dare yorimo saki nis ono doubutsu no kokoro wo rikai shi, saidaigen no chiryou ni atarimasu.

No matter how small the disease or how little suffering, it will understand the animal's mind before anyone else and provide the utmost treatment.

2. Results

From the definitions in the dictionaries and examples above, we can conclude the differences between [ikura] and [donna ni] are as follows.

幾ら[ikura] is more about assumptions or default conditions that matter the limits of quantity/number of times and degree. "Ikura" is used in front of a verb to indicate the number and quantity of "how many", and in front of an adjective/adjective verb to indicate the height/limit of "how much", and in front of a noun. I can be said as it represents the default condition of "actually".

Meanwhile, どんないこ [donna ni] is more about the assumptions that question the method and its number. Furthermore, "donna ni" is used before a verb to represent various states / aspects such as "how / in what state / in what direction", but it does not come before a noun. This shows the hypothetical conditions that envision various states and aspects of busyness, such as "this and that", in other words, "no matter how".

3. Conclusions

It is important for Japanese learners to determine the meaning and the use of some expressions that have similarities but different meaning. This will help them to be able to deliver the message and the intention of the sentences correctly.

In [ikura] and [donna ni], the similarity is that both expressions say about assumption. However [ikura] strengthens more to the limit/degree while [donna ni] is more to the method of the action mentioned in the sentences.

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