

■ Parts of Speech

● What Are Parts of Speech?

Once one recognizes a word in a language, one goes on to classify it according to the form it assumes within a sentence or a sequence of sentences, the grammatical meaning it carries, how the constituents of the word are constructed, and what grammatical functions the components carry. There is an important question of what a word is to begin with when one studies language. A word has both lexical and grammatical characteristics, and these two aspects are inseparable. On the other hand, some consider dependent morphemes, which possess only the grammatical aspect and not the lexical aspect, to be also words, such as particles and auxiliary verbs. In Japanese language instruction, it is advisable not to teach explicitly the principles involved in parts of speech classification. Rather, it is meaningful to spend some time covering the usage of particles and auxiliary verbs that appear in and at the end of sentences, so that students will develop proficiency in the use of such entities.

● Major Parts of Speech

Major parts of speech that structure the basic framework of a sentence include nouns, verbs, and adjectives (*i*-adjectives and *na*-adjectives). A noun changes its form through what is called declension (case change), and has the structural function to become the subject of the sentence, i.e., the thing about which a statement is made. A verb or an adjective changes its form via conjugation, and has the structural function of predicating, that is, making a statement about the subject. There are also adverbs (adverbs of manner, degree, and declaration) and adnominals. They do not change their word form, and their function is to semantically restrict components of the basic sentence structure. Connectives, which have the function of connecting sentences, and interjections, which can form sentences on their own, contribute to fill out the sentence structure. Neither of them undergo word form change.

● Nouns

In many cases a noun is accompanied by a case particle, and forms the core part of a syntactic component, such as the subject or object, of a sentence. In that capacity the noun works as a word that carries concrete meaning such as persons, things, events, and phenomena, all of which have a part in the situation expressed by the sentence. A noun assumes the semantic role as the subject or object of the situation which a verb or adjective expresses. It may also accompany *da*, *de aru*, *desu*, etc. to function as the predicate of a sentence. In this capacity, the noun carries non-concrete meaning such as attributes and relationships of and among people, things, and events. Among the nouns, quantifiers demonstrate unusual behavior not seen in other nouns.

● Verbs

A verb may express movement, change, or state, and primarily functions as the predicate of a sentence. Verbs conjugate, and change according to grammatical categories such as voice, aspect, and mood. They also possess functions to suspend the predication in a sentence, or to modify nouns.

● Adjectives

Adjectives conjugate, express attributes of people, things, and events, express people's senses and feelings, modify nouns, and predicate attributes when acting as the predicate of a sentence. The adverbial form of an adjective modifies the movement and the manner of change expressed by the adverbial form of a verb, and it also functions to limit the degree of the concept of stativity.

● Adverbs

Adverbs do not change form. In many cases they are classified into three main categories: 1. adverbs of manner which modify the movement and change expressed by the proposition of a sentence; 2. adverbs of degree which modify the state expressed by the proposition; 3. adverbs of declaration which appear at the beginning of a sentence and reinforce or indicate in advance the modality of the sentence.

→動詞 Verbs (2-B), 形容詞 Adjectives (2-B), 名詞 Nouns (2-B), 数量詞 Quantifiers (2-B), 様態副詞 Adverbs of Manner (2-B), 程度副詞 Adverbs of Degree (2-B), 陳述副詞 Declarative

Adverbs(2-B), 助詞 Particles (2-B), 助動詞 Auxiliary Verbs (2-B)

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