

■ Grammatical Categories

● What Are Grammatical Categories?

The grammatical meaning that a word carries can be categorized according to the change that is added to the form of the word. Forms that distinguish the grammatical meaning of words can be grouped into “genus” and “species” by collecting ones that belong to different “species” but which comprise the same “genus,” and their common grammatical meaning is called a grammatical category. For example, the forms *aru* and *yomu* signify “non-past,” and *atta* and *yonda* signify “past.” These forms all indicate tense. Tense, in this case, is a grammatical category.

● Grammatical Categories of the Predicate

The predicate of a Japanese sentence can be a verb predicate, an adjective predicate, or a noun predicate. The grammatical categories of the predicate include affirmation/negation, tense, politeness, and modality (mood).

Each grammatical category can be manifested in morphologically contrasted forms such as Affirmation/Negation: *hashiru* ‘to run’ (affirmative) vs. *hashiranai* ‘not run’ (negative); Tense: *hashiru* ‘run’ (non-past) vs. *hashitta* ‘ran’ (past); Politeness: *hashiru* ‘run’ (plain) vs. *hashirimasu* ‘run’ (polite); Modality: declarative modality, such as *hashiru* ‘run, will run’ (assertion) vs. *hashiru darō* “will probably run” (conjecture), and other forms of modality, such as *hashire* ‘Run!’ (imperative) vs. *hashirō* ‘intend to run, let’s run’ (volition, invitation). There are two types of modality: modality of cognition, and modality of utterance and transmission. The modality of declaration, command, volition, and invitation are included in the modality of utterance and transmission. The modality of declaration includes assertion and conjecture, which are derived from the modality of recognition.

Adjective predicates can be categorized as follows: Affirmation/Negation: *ōkii* ‘big’ (affirmation) vs. *ōkikunai* ‘not big’ (negation); Tense: *ōkii* ‘big’ (non-past) vs. *ōkikatta* ‘was big’ (past); Politeness: *ōkii* ‘big’ (plain) vs. *ōkii desu* ‘big’ (polite) vs. *ōkyū gozaimasu* ‘big (very polite); Modality: *ōkii* ‘big’ (assertion) vs. *ōkii darō* ‘must be big’ (conjecture).

Noun predicates can be categorized as follows: Affirmation/Negation: *gakusei da* ‘is a student’ (affirmation) vs. *gakusei de (wa) nai* ‘is not a student’ (negation); Tense: *gakusei da* ‘is a student’ (non-past) vs. *gakusei datta* ‘was a student’ (past); Politeness: *gakusei da* ‘is a student’ (plain) vs. *gakusei desu* ‘is a student’ (polite) vs. *gakusei de gozaimasu* ‘is a student’ (very polite); Modality: *gakusei da* ‘is a student’ (assertion) vs. *gakusei darō* ‘is probably a student’ (conjecture). In adjective predicates and noun predicates, politeness is expressed in a tripartite contrast.

When one tries to understand the grammatical meaning of a form, it is important to recognize, for instance, that a marked form, e.g., *hashira+nakat+ta+deshō*, expresses negation+past+politeness+conjecture, whereas the unmarked form, *hashiru*, expresses affirmation+non-past+plain+assertion. *Hashitta* does not only express past; it also carries other grammatical categories.

● Grammatical Categories of Verbs

Some, not all, verbs carry voice and aspect, which are not included in the grammatical categories mentioned above with adjective and noun predicates. Active voice and direct passive voice, which are the major aspects of voice, are expressed in morphological contrasts, e.g., *shikaru* ‘to scold’ vs. *shikarareru* ‘to be scolded’. The core aspect is expressed as *shikaru* ‘scold’ vs. *shikatteiru* ‘is scolding’.

→ ヴォイス Voice (2-E), アスペクト Aspect (2-G), テンス Tense (2-G), モダリティ Modality (2-H).

● References

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