

## ■ Spontaneity

Spontaneity refers to the phenomenon where emotion, thoughts, judgment, recognition, or movements occur regardless of or in spite of the subject's will.

Grammatical forms that express spontaneity include the use of the auxiliary verb *-(ra)reru*, as in *Mukashi no koto ga shinobareru* 'I reminisce the old days', and the use of the suffix *-eru* of the five-row verbs, as in *Kare no ima no sugata o miru to nakete shimau* 'I cannot help crying when I see what he is today.'

Transitive spontaneous sentences usually occur with the cases *...ni ...ga*, and have the first person subject. Intransitive verbs, such as *(eda ga) oreru* 'a branch snaps' and *(ito ga) kireru* 'thread breaks', also express situations that arise regardless of human intention. However, the subject of a spontaneous sentence is a noun phrase experiencing one's own thoughts or movements, as in *Ano koro no koto ga (boku ni wa) natsukashiku omoidasareru* 'I fondly recall those days,' while intransitive sentences do not have this characteristic.

Spontaneous sentences basically express phenomena where thoughts, emotion, and movements spring up for real. However, negative spontaneous sentences acquire stativity, as in *dō kangaetemo kare ga hannin da to wa omowarenai* 'I just cannot believe he is the culprit.' There is a continuum here where, at the other end there is a potential sentence that clearly expresses the speaker's will to carry out the action (e.g., *Kare no namae ga dōshitomo omoidasenai* 'For the life of me, I cannot remember his name'), and a sentence, such as *Dō kangaetemo kare ga hannin da to wa omoenai* 'I cannot think he is the culprit, no matter how hard I try' exists in between.

Verbs used for spontaneous sentences in the current standard Japanese are not as productive as they were in classical language, as well as in some current dialects where spontaneous sentences may be derived from verbs of volition in general. In the current standard Japanese, only a limited group of verbs that express emotion, thoughts, judgment, and recognition are used with the auxiliary affix *-(ra)reru*, and just a few verbs that accompany the affix *-eru*, such as *warau* 'laugh' and *naku* 'cry'. As far as style is concerned, spontaneous sentences are not common in spoken language, and the usage is fairly limited. In contemporary speech, spontaneity tends to be expressed analytically by the use of adverbs such as *omowazu* 'in spite of oneself', *shizen ni* 'spontaneously,' and auxiliary verbs, such as *-te shimau* 'do something in spite of oneself'.

→ ヴォイス Voice (2-E), 可能文の諸特徴 Various Characteristics of Potential Sentences (2-E)

## ● References

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