

■ Auxiliary Verbs

Of the words that are always used with other words and not independently (attached words), those that conjugate are called auxiliary verbs. The term ‘auxiliary verb’ is used in English grammar books, and it means that an auxiliary verb is a verb that assists the main verb by adding various meanings. In this sense Japanese helping verbs, e.g., the *te*-form expressions built around verbs (*~teiru*, *~teoku*, *~tekureru*), may match the category of English auxiliary verbs in the original sense of the word.

Traditionally in school grammar, auxiliary verbs in current Japanese are usually classified into semantic groups such as causative (*seru*, *saseru*), passive, potential, spontaneous, honorific (*reru*, *rareru*), wish (*tai*, *tagaru*), polite (*masu*), negative (*nai*, *nu*, *n*), assertion, designation (*da*, *desu*), past, perfective (*ta*), volition, inference (*u*, *yō*), negative volition and inference (*mai*), inference and similitude (*yōda*), presumption (*rashii*), manner, hearsay (*sōda*), and so on.

Some try to put *darō* and *deshō* into a separate category called auxiliary verbs of inference, and *mitaida* into a category called the auxiliary verbs of inference and similitude. Further, some consider complex forms such as *noda*, *kamoshirenai*, and *nakerebanaranai*, equivalent to auxiliary verbs (complex auxiliary verbs). Auxiliary verbs exhibit similar characteristics to closely related words, such as helping verbs, word final affixes, and conjugated word endings. The scope and understanding of auxiliary verbs are far from being unified.

There are auxiliary verbs that connect only to verbs, such as (*sa-*)*seru*, (*ra-*)*reru*, *tai*, and *masu*, and they function like suffixes. Then there are ones that can connect with verbs, adjectives, and the noun+*da* construction, such as *ta*, *yōda*, *sōda* (hearsay), and *darō*, and they are involved in how to define time and the speaker’s judgment. *Da* and *desu*, which are used to construct noun predicate sentences, only connect with nouns and noun-equivalents (*taigen*). Because of this, some have established a separate category for them called *hanteishi*. Auxiliary verbs range from having a well-developed system of conjugation (e.g., (*sa-*)*seru*, (*ra-*)*reru*) to having no conjugation (e.g., *u*, *yō*, *mai*) (non-conjugating auxiliary verbs). In particular, these non-conjugating auxiliary verbs go against the concept of auxiliary verbs, and the semantic and functional similarities and continuity with sentence final particles, which do not conjugate and are placed at the end of the sentence, should be re-examined.

In Japanese language education, auxiliary verbs are not taught as such. They are presented in the context of verb conjugation forms and expression patterns. Pedagogically, for practical purposes, the conditional forms (*tara*, *nara*) of *ta* and *da* may be presented separately as conjunctive particles that express condition. What follows is the conjugation of the verb *miru* as an example: *misaseru* (causative), *mirareru* (passive), *mimasu* (polite *masu* form), *minai* (negative), *mita* (past *ta* form), *miyō* (volitional), *mitara* (conditional), and so on. Expression patterns include *miru beki da* / *nakereba naranai* (obligation, duty), *miru darōka* / *kamoshirenai* (uncertainty), *miru yōda* / *rashii*, *misōda* (judgment based on evidence), *mirusōda* (hearsay). Of these, the conjugated forms express voice, affirmation/negation, and tense, while expression patterns handle modality. There is regularity in the order in which multiple auxiliary verbs are sequenced. In *misase rare taku nakat ta yō da* ‘it seems he didn’t want to be forced to see’, the elements are strung, in general, from the more objective to more subjective modality expressions, in the order of voice (causative→passive→wish), affirmation/negation, tense, and modality.

In Japanese language education, it is necessary to sort similar expressions based on what the speaker intends to express. It is essential that the instruction take a broad view of the sentence final expressions as a whole, including helping verbs, complex forms, and expressions involving sentence final particles, without limiting the instruction to the conventional framing of auxiliary verbs.

→ ヴォイス Voice (2-E), テンス Tense (2-G), モダリティ Modality (2-H)

● References

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