

■ Expressions of Uncertainty

In a predication sentence when the speaker has the grasp of the situation as her/his own experience or knowledge, the situation is expressed in the unmarked form (conclusive form), as in *Ame wa mada futte iru* 'It is still raining,' and *Kare wa mō uchi ni kaetta* 'He has already gone home.' In contrast, when the speaker has not yet grasped the situation as her/his own experience or knowledge, and when there is some uncertainty in the way s/he understands the situation, the situation is expressed using a marked form (with the use of an auxiliary verb, for instance), as in *Ame wa mada futte iru darō* 'I assume it's still raining,' or *Kare wa mō uchi ni kaetta kamoshirenai*, 'He might have already gone home.'

● Expressions of Speculation

Darō is a form with which the speaker expresses that s/he understands the situation through imagination and thought (=conjecture). With *darō*, it is possible to differentiate whether the judgment on the validity of the proposition is established, and if it is, how certain the speaker is about the judgment. If the judgment is not established (=doubt), the speaker can express the uncertainty by adding *ka* at the end, as in *Ame wa mada futte iru darō ka* 'I wonder if it is still raining.' The degree of certainty may be expressed by adding adjectives, as in {*Kitto* 'surely'/*Tabun* 'probably'/*Osoraku* 'most likely'} *ame wa mada futte iru darō*.' One characteristic of *darō* is that it has a derived usage where the question form is used by the speaker to confirm the content of the listener's recognition, as in *Asoko ni shingō ga aru darō?* 'You see a traffic signal over there, don't you?' Even when an unmarked form is used, the meaning of speculation is evident at sentence level in such examples as *Asu wa kitto hareru* 'It will definitely be sunny tomorrow' (future situation), (*Tabun*) *aitsu ga hannin da* 'He (probably) is the culprit' (judgment in a nominal sentence), and *Mō sukoshi ganbareba kateta noni* 'Had he tried a little harder, he would have won' (counter-factual conditional).

When *darō* is used in dialog, it can sound as if the speaker is arbitrary and dogmatic. The speaker can avoid this by using the *nodewa nai ka* form, as in *Tabun ashita wa ame ga furu n janai ka?* 'Probably it will rain tomorrow, I think.' *Nodewa nai ka*, which originally is a form of negative question, has come to be used to express uncertainty. It collocates with an adverb of degree, the same as *darō*. *Nodewa nai ka* does not have the nuance of dogmatism because, unlike *darō*, it maintains the characteristic of a question, presents judgment (a hypothesis) that is in the process of formulating, and accepts the listener's comments on it. It can be information-providing or information-seeking, depending on the use environment.

A verb of thinking, *omou*, may also function as an expression of the kind of uncertainty that *darō* expresses. When the verb is in the *suru* form and when the first person subject is omitted, *to omou* can be replaced by *darō* on the whole, as in *Asu wa ame ni naru to omou* 'I think it is going to rain tomorrow.' However, where there is a marked modality form in the quoted clause, as in *Asu wa ame ni naru darō to omou* 'I think it will probably rain tomorrow' and *Asu wa eiga o mi ni ikō to omou* 'I think I will go see a movie tomorrow,' it can only express the speaker's judgment and intention, and not the meaning of uncertainty. Also, when *to omou* is used as an expression of uncertainty, it cannot be used in a monolog, as in (to oneself) *Asu wa ame ni naru {*to omou/darō} naa* 'I think

it'll rain tomorrow'). This shows that *to omou* is an expression which objectivizes one's own thought content and communicates it to the listener.

● Expressions of Possibility

Darō judges the validity of the proposition through imagination and thought, whereas *kamoshirenai* abandons the judgment on whether the proposition is true or false. Instead, it simply states that “there is a possibility” that the proposition is true. That is why it can be used in juxtaposing contradicting propositions, as in *Asu wa ame kamoshirenai*, *sō de nai kamoshirenai* ‘It may or may not rain tomorrow.’ In actual conversation, the necessity and effectiveness of the introduction of possibility are decided in relation to the context in question. In the example, *Asu, o-jama shitemo ii desu ka? – Asu wa ie ni {*iru/inai} kamoshiremasen* ‘May I come visit tomorrow? –I may {*be/not be} home tomorrow,’ the speaker chooses the possibility that s/he may not be home in order to decline the partner's visit, although s/he may be home.

■ Expressions of Inevitability

The forms *ni chigainai* and *hazu da* express that the proposition in question inevitably holds up. When used in speculating about unknown information, as in *Kare no itte iru koto wa tsujitsuma ga awanai. Kare wa uso o tsuite iru {ni chigainai/hazu da}* ‘His story is not consistent. He must be lying,’ the two forms are similar in meaning. However, *hazu da* can be used when the validity of the content of the proposition is already established, as in *Hontō nara, kare wa mō sotsugyō shite iru hazu na no da ga* ‘If everything has worked out, he should have graduated by now,’ and *Mado ga aite iru. Samui hazu da* ‘The window is open. No wonder it is cold.’ The other form does not have this function. *Ni chigainai* expresses the “conviction” that the content of the proposition stands up when the validity of it is unknown, whereas *hazu da* fundamentally assumes that the proposition holds up “as a matter of course” based on logic and laws.

→助動詞 Auxiliary Verbs (2-B), モダリティ Modality (2-H)

● References

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