

■ Characteristics of Reciprocal Sentences

● What Is a Reciprocal Sentence?

The basic premise of reciprocal sentences is that they have the structure of [Verb (Noun_x, Noun_y) = Verb (Noun_y, Noun_x)]. For example, in [*Hiroshi ga Yōko to kekkonshita* = *Yōko ga Hiroshi to kekkonshita* ‘Hiroshi married Yoko=Yoko married Hiroshi’] and [*Tarō wa Jirō to naguriatta* = *Jirō wa Tarō to naguriatta* ‘Taro had a fist fight with Jiro=Jiro had a fist fight with Taro’], the right and left sides of the equation describe the same event. In other words, the same situation will be described if we interchange the case particles of the two components.

● Forms of Reciprocal Sentences

(1) First, there are reciprocal verbs that form reciprocal sentences, such as *rikon suru* ‘get a divorce’, *tatakau* ‘fight’, *kōsai suru* ‘have friendly relations with’, *kyōzon suru* ‘coexist’, *majiwaru* ‘intersect, mingle’, *hanmoku suru* ‘feud’, *chigau* ‘differ’, *kotonaru* ‘differ’. Example: *A shi ga B shi to kaidan shita* ‘Mr. A had a discussion with Mr. B.’

(2) Second, there is the form that adds the suffix *au*, as in *Kare wa kanojo to kata wo dakiatta* ‘He and she held each other’. This form may occur with (*o*)*tagaini*, as in *Hiroshi wa Yōko to (o)tagaini aishiatta* ‘Hiroshi and Yoko loved each other’, and with a prefix *ai* to the verb, as in *Genji wa Heike to ai-nikumiatta* ‘The Genji clan and the Heike clan hated each other’.

(3) *Awaseru* is suffixed to the verb, as in *hitosashiyubi o oyayubi to kosuriawasete* ‘rub the index finger and the thumb together.’

● Components of Reciprocal Sentences

When the reciprocal relationship is built around the *ga* phrase, the case relationship of the two reciprocal components is expressed by the [N *ga*, N *to*] structure. This, however, does not occur very often. There are also instances where there is a parallel construction the inside of the *ga* phrase, as in *Hiroshi to Yōko ga kata o dakiatta* ‘Hiroshi and Yoko embraced each other,’ and where a plural *ga* noun is used, as in *Shinrōshinpu ga kata o dakiatta* ‘The bride and groom embraced each other.’ When the reciprocity is built around the *o* phrase, the [N *o*, N *to*] structure is used, as in *Kare wa uraji o omoteji to torichigaeta* ‘He mistook the lining for the outer material.’

● Types of Reciprocal Sentences

There are at least two types of reciprocal sentences. One involves two (opposing) parties, as in *Hiroshi ga Yōko to kekkonshita* ‘Hiroshi married Yoko’ and *Tarō ga Jirō to kenashiatta* ‘Taro and Jiro quarreled with each other.’ The other type includes a collaborator, who is not essential to the execution of the originally intended action, as in *Tarō wa Jirō to hitotsukama no meshi o kutta* ‘Taro broke bread with Jiro’, and *Tarō ga Jirō to (iss honi) aite o kenashiatta* ‘Taro and Jiro trashed the other party’.

● References

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