

■ Modal Adverbs

Needless to say, the main means of expressions of modality are the predicate forms. In addition, Japanese abounds in adverbs that foretell, emphasize, define, and carry out the modal meaning of the predicate forms (e.g., *Dōzo irashite kudasai* ‘Do please come,’ *Tabun asu wa ame darō* ‘Probably, it will rain tomorrow,’ *Dōyara kare wa konai rashii* ‘I gather, it looks like he’s not coming.’). These adverbs are also important means of expression of modality. These adverbs are called modal adverbs. Adverbs of statement and sentential adverbs are similar concepts to modal adverbs. Because adverbs of statement presuppose concord with specific, marked forms, they include adverbs that agree with non-sentence final predicates such as *mosi...naraba* ‘if...’ Because sentential adverbs work within a sentence (but outside the proposition), they include adverbs of evaluation such as *ainiku* ‘unfortunately’ and *zannen nagara* ‘regrettably.’ Various arguments exist for and against including adverbs of statement and sentential adverbs in modal adverbs.

Modal adverbs can be classified according to the pattern of modal meaning expressed by the predicate forms. They are classified into three major groups: the action type, epistemic type, and question type. The action type includes ones that work together with modality of request (e.g., *dōzo* and *dōka*) and modality of desire (e.g., *zehi*, *semete*, *isso*, *dekireba*, *nantoka*, *dōshitemo*). The epistemic type includes ones that work with modality of speculation, inevitability and possibility (e.g., *sazo*, *masaka*, *kitto*, *tabun*, *osoraku*, *moshikasuruto*), and modality of deduction and hearsay (e.g., *dōmo*, *dōyara*, *nandemo*, *kikeba*). (Expressions such as *tashika ni*, *gen ni*, *jijitsu*, and *jissai*, which work with unmarked forms, should also be included in adverbs of the epistemic type.) The question type includes *hatashite*, *ittai*, *naze*, and *dōshite*.

The common function in all modal adverbs is to give advance notice of the modal meaning. There is a range as to which specific predicate forms can come after each adverb, but the possible modal meaning of the said sentence is fairly restricted, and the listener can predict it to a certain degree upon hearing the adverb.

Some of the modal adverbs have the function of emphasizing the modal meaning. *Zehi* in *Zehi kimi ni kite hoshii* ‘I really want you to come’ and *nantoka* in *Nantoka kotoshi-jū ni kekkon shitai* ‘I want to get married, if it’s at all possible, by the end of this year’ express the speaker’s strong feeling toward the realization of the situation. *Masaka* in *Masaka sonna koto wa aru mai* ‘It can’t be true’ and *ittai* in *Ittai dare ga konna itazura o suru no darō* ‘Who in the world would play such a prank?’ emphasize the denial of the situation and doubt.

Some modal adverbs define the modal meaning of the predicate form. In *Asu wa {kitto/tabun/osoraku} ame darō* ‘It will certainly/probably/most likely rain tomorrow,’ *darō* cannot express the degree of certainty by itself. *Kitto*, *tabun*, and *osoraku* can differentiate the degree.

In some cases the adverb itself, not the predicate, seems to determine the modal meaning. For instance, *Kare wa asu kuru* ‘He’ll come tomorrow’ and *Aitsu wa chōnan da* ‘He’s the oldest son’ are usually interpreted as the speaker describing what s/he knows. If we add *tabun* ‘probably’ and *kitto* ‘definitely’ respectively to these sentences ‘*Tabun kare wa asu kuru*,’ and ‘*Kitto aitsu wa chōnan da*,’ they become sentences of speculation. Here the adverbs are acting on behalf of the predicate to express the modal meaning.

→モダリティ Modality (2-H)

● References

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