

On Possible Expressions and Spontaneous Expressions in Japanese

Zhulin Jiang

Nanchong Vocational College of Culture and Tourism, Nanchong 637000, China

Abstract. In modern Japanese, there are various forms and meanings of possible expressions and spontaneous expressions, making them an important and error prone part in Japanese learning. Therefore, based on previous research, this article discusses possible Expressions and spontaneous expressions of Japanese. The main body of this manuscript is divided into three parts. Part one: Analyze forms and meanings of possible expressions in Japanese. Part two: Analyze forms and meanings of spontaneous expressions in Japanese. Part three: Attempt to correctly summarize the misuse, differences, and connections between possible expressions and spontaneous expressions. Possible expressions and spontaneous expressions are both distinguished and interconnected, with continuity. Thus, it can be argued that although possible expressions and spontaneous expressions of Japanese may seem simple on the surface, many learners still have the problem of misuse when using them. we should correctly understand the relationship between possible expressions and spontaneous expressions, so as to better serve Japanese language education.

Keywords: Possible Expressions in Japanese; Spontaneous Expressions in Japanese; Misuse; Differences; Connections.

1. Introduction

Possible expressions and spontaneous expressions in Japanese may seem simple on the surface, but they are important and error prone parts in Japanese learning. Possible expressions refers to the state in which a subject is likely to perform a certain action, or has the ability to perform a certain action. It may express the dynamic state of a verb, which can be represented by its subject or the dynamic state of the verb itself. Spontaneous expressions refers to behaviors and actions related to psychological activities, which are not absolutely controlled by self-awareness. When encountering certain situations, certain emotions or consciousness are involuntarily generated. The verbs often used for spontaneous expressions are mostly related to people's psychological activities, such as "考えられる" and "思われる". Possible expressions cannot be completely separated from spontaneous expressions, as spontaneous expressions and possible expressions are inseparable and closely related. There are also quite a few studies on this both domestically and internationally.

In foreign countries, most studies on possible expressions are based on their possible meanings. Yasuhiro Oda studied the essence of possible meaning. Some languages only use one form to express possibilities, while others use different forms to express possibilities. Shibuya Shengji has conducted extensive research on the forms and development of possible expressions, and has completed the most complete paper on possible expressions at this stage. Regarding spontaneous expressions, it is generally analyzed from the spontaneous state. Famous Japanese grammarians such as Hideo Teramura proposed the idea that the spontaneous voice is an independent voice. However, on the topic of the types and meanings of verbs involved in the spontaneous state, Hideo Teramura's viewpoint is different from that of the domestic Japanese grammar community.

In China, most of the possible expressions are analyzed based on their possible forms. Zhang Hongcheng has conducted research on the possible expressions of Japanese verbs and believes that when expressing possible meanings, verbs, apart from a few inherent possible verbs, are more likely to be variations of willful verbs. Zhang Yankai analyzed the possible expressions of automatic words, and in addition, Wang Guilan analyzed the misuse of possible states in Japanese. Regarding



spontaneous expressions, they are generally studied from the expression mode of spontaneous state. Ji Hong analyzed the expression of spontaneous voice in Japanese and believed that it was inappropriate to limit spontaneous voice to spontaneous auxiliary verbs in Japanese teaching.

Therefore, based on previous research, this article discusses possible expressions and spontaneous expressions in Japanese. Analyze forms and meanings of possible expressions in Japanese. Analyze forms and meanings of spontaneous expressions in Japanese. Attempt to correctly summarize the misuse, differences, and connections between possible expressions and spontaneous expressions. They are both distinguished and interconnected, with continuity.

2. Possible Expressions in Japanese

Although the usage and meaning of possible expressions may vary, one thing is consistent: the "possibility" of action behavior occurring. Whether the subject of the action is human or non biological, the core lies in the "possibility" of its realization.

2.1. Forms of Possible Expressions

Forms of possible expressions in Japanese can be expressed not only with the possible auxiliary verb "れる, られる", but also with the possible verbs "できる, 見える, きこえる, 分かる", as well as customary sentence structures such as "動詞の連体形+ことができる", "動詞の連用形+うる (える)", "動詞の連用形+かねる", and "動詞の連体形+わけにはいかない". There is correlation and fusion between these expressions. In specific situations, sometimes they can be interchanged without affecting their meaning, but sometimes they cannot be interchanged.

2.1.1. Possible Auxiliary Verbs "れる, られる"

The auxiliary verbs "れる, られる", which follow the verb, can form "passive, possible, spontaneous, and honorific". Sentences that use possible auxiliary verbs to indicate whether or not the object is usually indicated by "が, は" as "object language," while the subject of the action is indicated by "には, にも" or "は, も".

2.1.2. Possible Verbs

The verbs "できる, 見える, きこえる, 分かる" and so on all have the meanings of "can" and "may".

2.1.3. Idiomatic Sentence Patterns of Possible Expressions

In Japanese, there are many idiomatic sentences that express possibilities. Adding "ことができる" after the verb indicates possibility. And "動詞の連用形+うる (える)" is one of the possible expressions, it is an early and ancient possible expression form, and closely related to "れる, られる". In addition, when expressing the meaning of "cannot", it can also be in the form of "動詞の連用形+かねる" or "動詞の連体形+わけにはいかない".

2.2. Meanings of Possible Expressions

The possible expressions of the same form can be divided into ability possibility, state possibility, condition possibility, and result possibility based on their different meanings.

2.2.1. Ability Possibility

Ability possibility may refer to the ability of the actor to achieve a certain behavior, action, or function.

2.2.2. State Possibility

State possibility may refer to making the establishment of a situation possible based on the state of the action subject. At this point, the conditions for the establishment of the situation are at best only the state around the action subject, and do not involve the subject's ability.

2.2.3. Condition Possibility

Condition possibility may refer to whether a certain behavior can be implemented, completely depending on the corresponding conditions.

2.2.4. Result Possibility

Result possibility may refer to whether the expected outcome of the actor will occur when a certain situation occurs or after implementing a certain behavior.

3. Spontaneous Expressions in Japanese

"Spontaneous" refers to the natural occurrence of actions or emotions. The spontaneous state of a verb is a state or action that appears subconsciously and naturally. There are various ways of expressing spontaneous voice in Japanese.

3.1. Forms of Spontaneous Expressions

Forms of spontaneous expressions in Japanese, in addition to using the spontaneous auxiliary verb "れる, られる", can also be expressed using the spontaneous verb "見える, きこえる, 困る", the spontaneous adverb "なんとなく, 思わず, なんだか", and commonly used sentence structures such as "頭に浮かぶ", "寒気がする", "気になれない", and "匂いがしない".

3.1.1. Spontaneous Auxiliary Verb "れる, られる"

The spontaneous state composed of "れる" and "られる" is a commonly used form of expression in Japanese, often indistinguishable from possible verbs, so some people call it "natural possibility". But conceptually, it can be considered that the implementation of actions is independent of the subject's will, indicating spontaneity. In modern Japanese, verbs that can form a spontaneous state are limited in both types and quantities, and can only be followed by sensory verbs that represent psychological activities.

3.1.2. Spontaneous Verbs and Adverbs

Automatic words generally do not require an object and appear in the form of "～が自動詞". Such as "車が走る" and "魚が泳ぐ". Usually expresses the actions, behaviors, states, etc. presented in front of the speaker. The most common automatic words that express spontaneous voice are "きこえる, みえる, 匂う, 味わう, 困る" and so on.

3.1.3. Idiomatic Sentence Patterns of Spontaneous Expressions

In Japanese, there are many idiomatic sentences that express spontaneity. These idiomatic sentences are mainly used to express the speaker's feelings or thoughts that occur due to external influence or the opportunity of something. One type is idiomatic sentences that express spontaneous sensations, mainly referring to physiological or psychological reactions caused by special external phenomena, such as "悪感がする", "めまいがする", "息切れがする", and so on. Another type is idiomatic sentences that express spontaneous thinking, such as "目に浮かぶ", "思いを馳せる", "胸に浮かぶ", and so on.

3.2. Meanings of Spontaneous Expressions

The natural outcome of psychological changes and behaviors under certain conditions is not limited to "spontaneous" itself. According to the nature and degree of factors that trigger psychological changes, it can be divided into the following four categories.

3.2.1. Scenery and Emotional Type

This type represents the natural changes in the emotional world or inner activities of the parties due to the influence or influence of certain external factors, and the objective factors that trigger them can generally be found in the sentence.

3.2.2. Natural Exposure Type

This type of sentence subject is not touched by the outside world, but undergoes spontaneous psychological, spiritual, and behavioral changes during a certain period of time. This type of sentence does not contain words that indicate triggering factors, and its spontaneous meaning is relatively simple and plain.

3.2.3. Involuntary Type

This type represents the natural occurrence of psychological changes and behaviors that violate the will of the parties involved, and its spontaneous meaning is strong, used to describe the parties in an uncontrollable state of psychological change.

3.2.4. Implicit and Tactful Type

Spontaneous voice has the characteristic of excluding the subjective will of the parties involved and highlighting the objective factors of the situation, so it can be used to express the parties' opinions and opinions on things implicitly and tactfully. This can avoid giving people an arbitrary and subjective impression, and increase the implicit and aesthetic feeling of the language. This spontaneous state belongs to derivative usage and is common in Japanese books, magazines, and news reports.

4. Misuse, Differences, and Connections between Possible Expressions and Spontaneous Expressions

The forms of possible expressions and spontaneous expressions are similar, and many learners often misuse them. There is a difference between possible expressions and spontaneous expressions, but possible expressions cannot be completely separated from spontaneous expressions. Spontaneity and possibility are inseparable and closely related.

4.1. Misuse of Possible expressions and Spontaneous Expressions

There are various forms and meanings of possible expressions and spontaneous expressions in Japanese, and many learners are prone to misusing them.

4.1.1. Misuse of Possible Expressions

After learning the possible expressions in Japanese, students often make sentences like "ドアがなかなか開けることができない". If the standard Japanese is "ドアがあかない", there is no need for the possibility state. The abuse of possible states is not only "ことができる", but also "れる, られる".

4.1.2. Misuse of Spontaneous Expressions

After learning the spontaneous expressions in Japanese, one may find that some students often mix them with passive, possible, etc. Some students would create the sentence "両親は子供には待たれた". But in fact, this is a passive sentence, and the correct spontaneous expression is "両親には子供が待たれた".

4.2. Differences and Connections between Possible Expressions and Spontaneous Expressions

Possible expressions and spontaneous expressions are both distinguished and interconnected, with continuity. To determine spontaneity and possibility, one should weigh and consider the conditions of verb formation, such as verb meaning, verb continuity, altruism, as well as the meaning and subjectivity of the sentence.

4.2.1. Differences between Possible Expressions and Spontaneous Expressions

Firstly, possible expressions refers to the possibility of achieving a specific action, behavior, or state of the subject, while spontaneous expressions indicates that the subject is in a natural state. Verbs often use words that indicate psychological changes, such as "思う", "感じる", and so on.

4.2.2. Connections between Possible Expressions and Spontaneous Expressions

There may be an influence of automatic words such as "読める" and "知れる" between possible expressions and spontaneous expressions. These automatic words were originally not subject to strong action. In addition, although each possible expressions has its own characteristics and meanings, they are interconnected and have continuity from static to dynamic.

5. Summary

In modern Japanese, possible expressions refers to the dynamic state of a verb, which can be represented by its subject or the dynamic state of the verb itself. They are mainly divided into possible auxiliary verbs such as "れる" and "られる", possible verbs, and idiomatic sentences. According to the meaning expressed, it can be divided into ability possibility, state possibility, condition possibility, or result possibility. In addition, spontaneous expressions is a state or action that occurs unconsciously and naturally. Spontaneous expression is mainly divided into spontaneous auxiliary verbs "れる" and "られる", spontaneous verbs and adverbs, and idiomatic sentences. According to the nature and degree of the factors that trigger psychological changes, they can be divided into four types: scenery and emotional type, natural exposure type, involuntary type, implicit and tactful type. Therefore, there may be a distinction and mutual connection between possible expressions and spontaneous expressions. Thus, it can be argued that although possible expressions and spontaneous expressions of Japanese may seem simple on the surface, many learners still have the problem of misuse when using them. Therefore, we should correctly understand the relationship between possible expressions and spontaneous expressions, so as to better serve Japanese language education.

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