

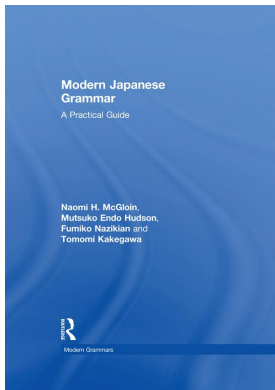
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Possibility and probability

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Possibility and probability

53.1 Saying whether something is considered possible or impossible

To say that something is considered possible or impossible, Japanese uses a number of expressions, of which the most common are:

53.1.1 *kanoo da, fukanoo da, muri da*

kanoo da ‘possible,’ **fukanoo da** ‘impossible,’ and **muri da** ‘impossible’ are all **na**-adjectives.

▶ 13.2

奨学金をもらうことは可能でしょうか。

Shoogakkin o morau koto wa kanoo deshoo ka.

Is it possible to receive a scholarship?

あしたまでに論文をしあげるのは不可能だ。

Ashita made ni ronbun o shiageru no wa fukanoo da.

It is impossible to finish the thesis by tomorrow.

あしたまでにスピーチを覚えるのは無理です。

Ashita made ni supiiichi o oboeru no wa muri desu.

It is impossible to memorize the speech by tomorrow.

Sometimes, the nominal **kanoosee** ‘possibility’ can be used.

試験にパスする可能性はあるでしょうか。

Shiken ni pasu suru kanoosee wa aru deshoo ka.

Is there a possibility that I will pass the exam?

全く可能性がないとは言えない。

Mattaku kanoosee ga nai to wa ienai.

I can’t say that there is no possibility at all.

53.1.2 *V(stem)-uru/enai*

A verb (stem) can be combined with **uru** to mean that there is a possibility of the action/state/event expressed by the main verb being realized. The negative form is **V(stem)-enai**. This expression is used with a limited set of verbs, the most frequent of which are **aru** ‘to exist’ and **okoru** ‘to occur.’

インフレはあり得る。

Infure wa ari-uru.

Inflation is possible.

世界から戦争がなくなるということはあり得ない。

Sekai kara sensoo ga nakunaru to yuu koto wa ari-enai.

It can't possibly happen that wars will disappear from the world.

53.1.3 V(plain) *kamoshirenai*

V(plain) **kamoshirenai** expresses that something is possible, that it may be true. In colloquial conversation, it is often shortened to **kamo**.

あしたは雪が降るかもしれません。

Ashita wa yuki ga furu kamoshiremasen.

It might snow tomorrow.

景気は回復しないかもしれません。

Keeki wa kaifuku shinai kamoshiremasen.

The economy might not recover.

今度の試験は難しいかなあ。

Kondo no shiken wa muzukashii ka naa.

I wonder if the next test will be difficult.

うん、難しいかも。(I)

Un, muzukashii kamo.

Yes, it might be.

53.2 Saying whether something is considered likely or probable

53.2.1 *daroo/deshoo*

The most common way of expressing that something is likely or probable is to use the sentence-final modal form **daroo** (informal)/**deshoo** (formal). This can follow nouns, **na**-adjectives (stem), **i**-adjectives and verbs (plain form). With **daroo/deshoo**, the speaker is more certain that the statement is true than **kamoshirenai**. This expression is often used with the adverb **tabun** 'probably.'

あの人は多分先生でしょう。

Ano hito wa tabun sensee deshoo.

That person is probably a teacher.

田中さんの住んでいるところはコンビニに近いから便利でしょう。

Tanaka-san no sunde iru tokoro wa konbini ni chikai kara benri deshoo.

Mr/Ms Tanaka's place is close to a convenience store, so it is probably convenient.

セールで買ったなら、安いでしょう。

Seeru de kattara, yasui deshoo.

If you buy at a sale, it will be cheap.

あしたは雪が降るでしょう。

Ashita wa yuki ga furu deshoo.

It will probably snow tomorrow.

あの人がパーティーに来るかしら。

Ano hito paatii ni kuru kashira.

Do you think he will come to the party?

多分来ないだろう。(I)

Tabun konai daroo.

Probably not.

The degree of certainty expressed by **daroo/deshoo** varies depending on the adverbs used. When it occurs with the adverb **kitto** 'certainly,' the speaker expresses a high degree of certainty. **Daroo/deshoo** is not appropriate when talking about the speaker's own actions. In such a case, **daroo to omoimasu** 'I think I will' should be used.

ピクニックに行きますか。

Pikunikku ni ikimasu ka.

Are you going to the picnic?

多分行かないだろうと思います。

*多分行かないでしょう。

Tabun ikanai daroo to omoimasu.

***Tabun ikanai deshoo.**

I probably won't (go).