

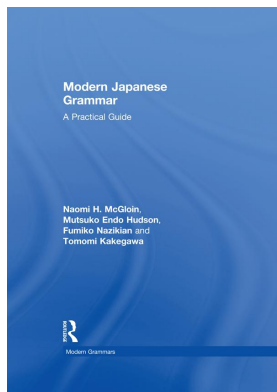
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Certainty and uncertainty

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Certainty and uncertainty

54.1 Saying how certain one is of something

The following adverbs and set phrases express the speaker's sense of certainty.

絶対 (に)	zettai (ni)	'absolutely'
必ず	kanarazu	'certainly; necessarily'
きっと	kitto	'certainly'
決して	kesshite (neg.)	'definitely not'
間違いなく	machigainaku	'unmistakably'
まぎれもなく	magiremonaku	'no doubt'

明日の試合は絶対に勝てる。

Ashita no shiai wa zettai ni kateru.

We can definitely win tomorrow's match.

田中さんは間違いなく立派なリーダーだと思う。

Tanaka-san wa machigainaku rippa na riidaa da to omou.

I think that Mr/Ms Tanaka is unmistakably a great leader.

Kesshite is used only in negative sentences.

▶ 15.4

決して嘘はつきません。

Kesshite uso wa tsukimasen.

I definitely don't lie.

The following constructions are also used to state the speaker's certainty. They are often used in combination with an adverb of certainty.

- Clause (plain) **ni chigainai** 'must be that . . .,' 'no doubt'

きっと新しい社長は山下さんがなるにちがいない。

Kitto atarashii shachoo wa Yamashita-san ga naru ni chigainai.

It is certain that Mr/Ms Yamashita will be the new company president.

- Clause (plain) **ni kimatte iru** 'I am sure that . . .'

隆は来ないに決まっている。

Takashi wa konai ni kimatte iru.

I'm sure that Takashi will not come.

54.2 Expressing doubt about something

Various expressions are used to communicate one's doubt, including the following.

Expressing doubt about something

- Clause (plain) **to wa omoenai/masen** ‘cannot think that . . .’

あの人が大学生だとは思えない。

Ano hito ga daigakusee da to wa omoenai.

I cannot think that that person is a college student.

うまくいくとは思えません。

Umaku iku to wa omoemasen.

I cannot think that it will go well.

▶ 15.2; 26.2

- Clause (plain) **to wa/nante shinjirarenai** ‘cannot believe that . . .’

田中さんが正しいとは信じられません。

Tanaka-san ga tadashii to wa shinjiraremasen.

I cannot believe that Mr/Ms Tanaka is right.

そんなことがあるなんて信じられない。

Sonna koto ga aru nante shinjirarenai.

I can't believe that such a thing could/will happen.

▶ 15.2; 26.2

Another way to express doubt is to use an embedded question with various expressions of doubt.

▶ 26.3

- Embedded question + **wakaranai** ‘not sure’

それが正しいかどうか分かりません。

Sore ga tadashii ka doo ka wakarimasen.

I'm not sure if that's right or not.

- Embedded question + **ayashii** ‘suspicious’

うまく行くかどうかあやしいと思います。

Umaku iku ka doo ka ayashii to omoimasu.

I suspect that it will not go well.

- Embedded question + **utagawashii** ‘doubtful’

あいつが本当にくるかどうかが疑わしいと思います。

Aitsu ga hontoo ni kuru ka doo ka utagawashii to omoimasu.

I think it's doubtful that he will really come.

To express one's general feeling of doubt or uncertainty, the following phrases may be used.

大丈夫かなあ。

Daijoobu ka naa.

I wonder if it's okay.

大丈夫ですかねえ。

Daijoobu desu ka nee.

I wonder if it's okay.

大丈夫かしら。

Daijoobu kashira.

I wonder if it's okay.

うまくいくかなあ。

Umaku iku ka naa.

I wonder if it'll go well.

変ですなえ。

Hen desu nee.

It's strange, isn't it.

おかしいですねえ。

Okashii desu nee.

It's weird, isn't it.

To express one's general sense of doubt toward what one's interlocutor has said, the following phrases may be used.

そうでしょうか。

Soo deshoo ka.

Would that be so?

そうですか。

Soo desu ka.

Is that so?

そうかもしれませんが...

Soo kamoshiremasen ga ...

It might be so, but ...

それはちょっと...

Sore wa chotto ...

That's a little ... (implying disagreement)

54.3 Asking people about their level of certainty

To ask how certain people are about what they said, one of the following questions may be used.

本当ですか。(F)

Hontoo desu ka.

Is it true? / Are you sure?

ほんと？(I)

Honto?

Is it true? / Are you sure?

確かですか。(F)

Tashika desu ka.

Are you certain?

絶対そうだって言える？(I)

Zettai soo da tte ieru?

Can you say that for sure?